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Sophie Rachel Handler

**Shadows of Childhood:**  
The Emergence of the Child in the Visual and Literary Culture  
of the French Long-Nineteenth Century

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the evolutionary journey of the concepts of the ‘child’ and ‘childhood’ during the French long-nineteenth century, as expressed through the period’s literary and visual culture. It analyses in what ways these concepts reflect a ‘shadowland’ existence in this period, and in turn how the shadow metaphor symbolises both the child itself and its complex, changeable condition. The shadow metaphor not only characterises various concepts associated with children and childhood, but extends to represent the nature of the study itself. The long-nineteenth century forms a stretch of ‘shadowland’ reflective of the abstruseness of the topic which lies between pre-Enlightenment ‘darkness’ and the illuminating ‘light’ of the twentieth century. The thesis focuses on this crucial though oft overlooked developmental period between the scholarly inception of children and childhood in the late Enlightenment, to their establishment as creative blueprints in twentieth-century modernism. Supported by a socio-historical grounding, an exploration of the work of Baudelaire, Hugo, Rousseau, Proust, Redon, Degas, Renoir, and Loïe Fuller, amongst others, enables us to ‘unpack’ the ways in which this shadowy quality gave rise to not only a curiosity to explore the fascinating ‘other’ of the child and its condition in this complex epoch, but also a proclivity to explain and control it. Investigating the rhetoric of children and childhood, considering their artistic and literary significance at this time, the thesis both accounts for how writers and artists reflected upon childhood, and explores the process by which children and childhood were harnessed by intellectual and creative endeavours. Various as the case studies prove, they can all be united in their fulfilment of a regression towards and reimagining of one’s childhood and personhood, like a re-engagement with the ‘shadow child’ within, in the face of the disturbing ephemerality of self alongside the destabilising onset of modernity.

**Shadows of Childhood:**  
The Emergence of the Child in the Visual and Literary  
Culture of the French Long-Nineteenth Century

**Sophie Rachel Handler**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of the History of Art  
School of Education  
University of Durham  
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# INTRODUCTION

## *Lighting the Candle*

“Memories of the lost desert wastes, like the distant country of his childhood,  
became refuges in periods of corrupting melancholy.”

Paul Webster, *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*<sup>1</sup>

“Toutes les grandes personnes ont d’abord été des enfants. (Mais peu d’entre elles  
s’en souviennent).”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*<sup>2</sup>

In the post-Enlightenment context of nineteenth-century Europe, the study of children and childhood began to emerge alongside the ‘discovery’ of children and childhood as entities and concepts separate to adults and adulthood and thus worthy of particular attention and interest. The study of children and childhood at this time advanced in a complex way as intellectuals and cultural practitioners explored the relevance of these subjects at social, cultural, and conceptual levels. Befitting of the ongoing symbol and metaphor which runs through this thesis, the topic of children and childhood and the study thereof, can be characterised by virtue of its complexity and opacity as something of what might be called a ‘shadowland’, oftentimes bewildering and mysterious to traverse. In the passage from the pre-Enlightenment ‘darkness’ to the elucidating ‘light’ of the twentieth century proper, there is a stretch of ‘shadowland’ encompassing the long-nineteenth century during which these complex concepts of children and childhood are negotiated. Whilst its shadowy nature manifests itself variously, it is this very quality of abstruseness and

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Webster, *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: The Life and Death of the Little Prince* (London: Papermac, 1994), 110.

<sup>2</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1999), ‘Dedication’. Translation: “All grown-ups were children first. (But few of them remember it)”. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Egmont UK Ltd, 2013), ‘Dedication’.



multitudinousness which has given rise to not only an intense curiosity to explore and understand, but also a pervasive propensity to codify and control. Whilst many intellectuals, writers, artists, and educators across Europe began to retrieve the child and childhood from the darkness of pre-Enlightenment thought and attempt to make their way through its shadows thereafter, the specific context of France in the long-nineteenth century offers a particularly fruitful case study.<sup>3</sup>

Falling between the burgeoning acknowledgement of the child as an entity in its own right in the Enlightenment context of the late-eighteenth century and the modernist championing of the childhood state in the early decades of the twentieth, we find something of a social, historical, political, and cultural stretch of shadowy no-man's-land. It is in this shadowy stretch that we find scholarly, literary, and artistic outpourings which reflect the period's varied approach to and understanding of concepts and images of children and childhood, and in turn the process by which children and childhood are harnessed by intellectual and creative endeavours for an array of personal, professional, or collective aims. This thesis comprises an exploration of the way in which this process manifested itself in the discrete context of the French long-nineteenth century. It explores how and in what ways the experiences, images, and journey of the child as a concept can be likened to the notion of a 'shadowland' existence, and in turn the shadow ultimately serve as a symbol of the child. Mindful of their pervasive and varied 'otherisation', an investigation into the rhetoric of the child and childhood is established, reviewing its significant inspiration in the creative work of the arts and literature of France in this period. The thesis will both demonstrate and account for the various ways in which

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<sup>3</sup> The term and concept of the 'long-nineteenth century' will be explained in detail later in the Introduction.

artists and writers reflected upon childhood, sometimes consolidating and sometimes challenging the status quo, as well as studying their implications for art, society, and individual life.

Present throughout the entire investigation is the ongoing metaphor of the shadow, which, by its very nature, undulates and weaves its way through various themes and concepts, fading and reappearing in line with its various interpretations and symbolism. The metaphor of the shadow is reflective of so many aspects, conditions, experiences and concepts of the child and its condition at this point in time, functioning as an image which is both significant and highly symbolic. This ‘shadowland’ was born chiefly out of the perceived ‘otherness’ of the child and of his or her ability to negotiate an in-between world, straddling the crossroads of modernity and nature, invention and truth, fallacy and reality, and the constant blurring thereof.

The book *L’Enfant et la vie familiale sous l’ancien régime* (*Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*) of 1960 by the social historian Philippe Ariès is widely considered the most influential catalyst in establishing the history of childhood and children as topics of social, cultural, and scholarly interest. More specifically, Ariès’ argument centres on the attestation that childhood is chiefly a concept and state of modern creation and understanding, and that accordingly, ideas of childhood have changed with time. Whilst Ariès’ theories are not without criticism, especially with regards to his denouncing view of the role and treatment of the medieval child, the influence of his work has remained steadfast, especially in the academic world.<sup>4</sup> For example, writer Stephen Metcalf has remarked upon how

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<sup>4</sup> Historian Nicholas Orme dedicated his 2001 book *Medieval Children* to rebuking Ariès’ theories.

Ariès' emphasis on cultural causes behind ideas influenced the thinking of Michel Foucault, who in turn has since had some degree of impact on most academic disciplines.<sup>5</sup> For this thesis, not only has Ariès' contribution facilitated a study drawing from the literature which arose from his catapulting of the topic into the scholarly consciousness of the mid-twentieth century and beyond, but more specifically, his theory on the changing roles, concepts, and images of the child and childhood throughout history proves a significant backdrop and scaffold to the current project.

This thesis builds on this approach, but with considerable weight placed on evidence to be found within various readings of literary and artistic culture of the period, as opposed to a more holistic and purely historical analysis of various documents and artefacts. Accordingly, whilst much of the thesis is underpinned by various theoretical approaches to understanding concepts and images of children and childhood in this context, the method tends to focus upon a close reading of materials of interest, namely literature, artwork, and other types of visual culture, within the context of the cultural history of both their creation and reception, thereby analysing the fluidity and evolution of thoughts and concepts alongside historical, social, and political developments. Similarly, the thesis does not attempt to force or fabricate meanings in the past, but instead to offer visual and literary readings and understandings supported by contextual and scholarly scaffolds. In this vein, where applicable, reference is made to and comprehension drawn from biographical anecdotes related to certain case studies, for whilst a disproportionate amount of weight is not afforded to such inferences, it would nevertheless be imprudent to

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Metcalf, "Farewell to Mini-Me: The Fight over when Childhood Began", *Slate*, March 11, 2002, [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2002/03/farewell\\_to\\_minime.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2002/03/farewell_to_minime.html)

disregard the significance of the interplay between life and work, especially given the inextricable link between the child and the self, as the thesis elucidates.

As an outgrowth of Ariès' pivotal text, and no doubt inspired by his interdisciplinary approach to research, drawing upon medical documents, artwork, and school reports alike in order to formulate a rounded picture of what it was to be a child, there has since been some overlap between pedagogic and child-related scholarship, and that of an art historical focus, establishing a connection between the two fields. In the main, this link has been one which has surfaced in pockets and, rather symbolically, of the attention typically afforded to children, as a rather incidental or secondary consideration. Essentially, scholarship on concepts and conditions of children and childhood has tended to include art historical analysis only in a handful of instances where such input appeared particularly significant and, similarly *vice versa*, art historical scholarship has only engaged with images of children and childhood on the sporadic occasions that their inclusion proved important. This is not to say that concerted considerations of children and childhood in an art historical context is missing altogether, but it has tended to exist in a sort of anthological format, as a collection of essays which gathers a handful of prominent ideas.<sup>6</sup>

Crucially, for the most part, these ideas and concepts have been addressed rather in isolation, or within a very limited contextual sphere, and thus not

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<sup>6</sup> Prominent examples include: Marilyn R. Brown's *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud* (2002); Jonathan Fineberg's *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism* (1998); Richard Hobbs' *Impressions of French Modernity: Art and Literature in France 1850-1900* (1998), and Patricia Holland's *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular imagery* (2006).

considered in a developmental fashion, and certainly not within the context of the French long-nineteenth century. The mid-late-eighteenth century clash between Enlightenment theory and Romantic thought, which is credited as the turning point in the establishment of an interest in concepts of children and childhood, has been matched in cultural and scholarly focus by interest in the context of the child and childhood in the modernist movement in the early twentieth century.

Consequently, a gap has been left without a developmental bridge by which to link these two important though nevertheless connected cultural milestones. This thesis seeks to address this issue, by constructing a bridge which offers an insight into the meandering journey experienced by the child, both conceptually and more literally, as evidenced in the literary and visual culture of the period which stretches between these two oftentimes-considered polar points of reference. In other words, whilst the vast bulk of art historical scholarship on children and childhood has focused upon the modernist championing of the child which saw its position significantly elevated and exploited, commonly buttressed with reference to Enlightenment or Romantic anecdotes of interest, this thesis examines how this developed in the era in between, exploring significant concepts, theories, and images which built upon Enlightenment doctrine and Romantic rebukes and in turn laid the groundwork, so to speak, for the modernist explosion to come.

In so doing, the thesis draws upon an array of scholarship throughout the period in question and beyond, and from a variety of standpoints and academic fields. Prominent case studies range from as early as 1762 (Rousseau's *Émile*) through to 1913 (Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*) and will be outlined in more detail in the chapter summary to follow. The secondary scholarship

is similarly thorough and widespread, taking root in the fields of academic theory, contextual history, and art historical and literary scholarship, as well as ongoing cultural contributions and commentaries. In terms of prominent literary theory and social philosophy, the thesis is significantly indebted to the work of Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin, whose writing on concepts of identity, human development, and related theories on the childhood condition is further supported by the scholarship of figures such as Giles Deleuze, René Galand, Arthur Lovejoy, E.H. Erikson, Victor Turner, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Significant and ongoing input on the topics of the child and its role in aesthetic culture is drawn from the literature of writers Susan Stewart and Marina Warner, as well as social historian Daniel Thomas Cook and art theorist Ellen Handler Spitz. More focused pedagogic theory has relied upon a two-pronged contribution, firstly from those offering a psychological and psychoanalytical approach to the study of children and childhood, such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Melanie Klein, and Donald Winnicott, and secondly those focusing on issues of children and gender, such as Valerie Walkerdine, Judith Butler, Raewyn Connell, Carrie Paechter, Sally Scholz, and Adriana Benzaquén.

Much of the contextual and historical grounding has been buttressed by the work of historians of childhood such as Peter Coveney, Hugh Cunningham, Linda Pollock, and Larry Wolff, as well as Colin Heywood and of course Philippe Ariès, the latter two of whom have offered the additional interest of having focused in particular upon historical accounts of childhood in France. In this vein, the work of Sylvia Schafer and William Fortescue provides for excellent general context in the history of modern French society, with more focused scholarship on the history of France's material culture, especially that of toys and other similar childhood

interests, coming from historians and critics Christopher P. Barton, Kyle Somerville, Constance Eileen King, Anika Schleinzer, Beatrice Lewis, Christopher Turner, Margery Williams, Anthony Burton, and Joseph Wachelder, as well as exhibition curator and author David Hopkins.

In terms of scholarship in the fields of art historical, literary, and visual culture, this thesis draws a breadth of contributions from a wide selection of specialisms. Roger Fry and Jonathan Fineberg have proved significant in terms of their work on the role of child art in the field of modernism, whilst Carol Mavor, Patricia Holland, Lorna Martens, Anne Higonnet, and Norma Broude provide insightful readings of the child in art more generally, the latter of whom offers a feminist perspective. Analysis of modern European art is supported by the writings of Meyer Schapiro, Rudolf Arnheim, Werner Hofmann, Alessandra Comini, Stephen F. Eisenman, and Nancy Forgione, and commentary from Andrew Graham-Dixon, whilst the scholarship of Richard Shiff and Marcel Franciscono supports examinations into modernism as a concept and practice. In the field of nineteenth-century French art, analysis is buttressed by the accounts of Tamar Garb, Marilyn R. Brown, Susan P. Casteras, Greg M. Thomas, and Stéphane Mallarmé, with Felicia McCarren, Naoko Morita, and Sally Sommer offering literature focusing on a broader sense of this period's visual culture, namely that of dance and other performance art. Literary analysis, especially that of children's literature, is informed by the work of writers and critics such as Sarah Gilead, Bette Goldstone, and Jack Zipes. Finally, whilst proving more prominent in some chapters and in relation to certain concepts more than others, the work of eminent writers such as

Charles Baudelaire, J.M. Barrie, and to a lesser extent, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, offer an ongoing cultural underpinning to the thesis' study as a whole.

The thesis will comprise six main chapters, followed by a final concluding chapter. Whilst it adopts a broadly chronological format, by way of a sort of continuous circle emblematic of the cyclical development of the thesis' concepts, this lies underneath what is largely a thematic breakdown of chapters. This thesis does not profess to offer a comprehensive survey of the experiences of every child, the ways in which these contributed to each and every related concept, and in turn how this is reflected in all art and literature. It will, however, convey a complex range of ideas and theories at play during the French long-nineteenth century, and endeavours to tackle a wide range of issues in an inclusive and exploratory approach, with the aim of providing a detailed and insightful journey comprising a pathway with many visitation points.

To begin, Chapter One functions as a comprehensive introduction to the topics and concepts featured in the thesis as a whole. In doing so, this chapter begins at the end, so to speak, with an assessment of the roles, concepts, and images of the child and its childhood state in the modernist context of the early decades of the twentieth century. The remainder of the thesis explores the developmental process by which these radical views were reached and found expression in the decades before. The thesis elucidates this process by means of a sequence of thematic studies each addressing issues at play and concepts developed throughout the long-nineteenth century. This process commences by explicating various classifications of childhood, both historical and contemporary, thereby beginning what will become an ongoing examination of the ways in which efforts were made to box off and



codify in black and white what is an intrinsically ungovernable and shadowy concept. The chapter then explores how this ambiguity innate to the child and state of childhood was harnessed into a sort of pliability exploited by adults as a means to tailor children and their condition to their own designs, with particular attention paid in the context of early-twentieth century literary and visual culture to the modernist mobilisation of the child as a counter to the ills of modernity. In support of this, the chapter considers the role of artists such as Paul Cézanne, Paul Klee, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Pablo Picasso, and especially Henri Rousseau in the cementing of the child and its condition as something of a blueprint for modernist art practice, focusing in particular upon the perceived connection between notions of childhood and Primitivism. The chapter concludes with analysis of the conflation of the child and the ‘primitive’ by looking to Blaise Cendrars’ modernist text *La Féticheuse* (*The Shadow*) in order to exemplify the ongoing ‘otherisation’ of the child, the process and effects of which climaxed with modernism and which can be explicated and symbolised most effectively through the image and metaphor of the shadow, as demonstrated in the chapters to follow.

Chapter Two marks a return to what is broadly considered the beginning of this process, analysing the emerging discovery and acknowledgement of children and childhood from out of the darkness, as manifestation of both self and ‘other’ and a vehicle of self-discovery, against the backdrop of the period which saw the crossover between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. To begin with, this comprises an exploration of scholarship of prominent eighteenth-century academics, including Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, and Louis-Francois Jauffret, analysing their contribution to early concepts of

children and childhood. The majority of the chapter is then dedicated considering this literature alongside the work of the most widely-recognised French scholar of pedagogy of the Enlightenment era, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, investigating the complex and often contradictory philosophy of his seminal publication *Émile* (1762), examining the origins and effects of his particularly pervasive contribution to concepts and practices relating to children and childhood.

Chapter Three turns its attention to the experiences of the poor and working class child of nineteenth-century France. It begins by briefly considering examples of prominent political artworks of this epoch by Camille Pissarro and Honoré Daumier against the backdrop of the socio-political turmoil of the period. Whilst it invites brief contributions from figures such as Émile Bayard, Jean-Louis Forain, and Charles Baudelaire, the bulk of the chapter then focuses on two case studies engaging the work of Victor Hugo and Edgar Degas. This concentrates on their use of chiaroscuro, and emphasis on the symbolism of the grey shadows in between, as a means of highlighting society's extremes, and most particularly, analysing the various manifestation of the darkness which characterises the debasing 'otherisation' and plight of the poor child and their 'shadowland' existence.

Chapter Four, by contrast, considers the very personal, though not uncommon, experiences of middle class or bourgeois children, through the dual case studies of Marcel Proust and Odilon Redon. Following on from examining the contextual backdrop of French late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century bourgeois family life, the chapter principally concerns itself with the lives and works of the two case studies, exploring their soothing relationship with shadowy environments as a means of both escape from the harshness of modernity and a haven of creative

freedom, all the while symbolic of their yearning for the dark solace of the womb to which they endeavour to return.

Under the pervasive concept and metaphor of the toy-child, Chapter Five considers the extent to which various cultural apparatus, including the fairytales of Charles Perrault and Gustave Doré's accompanying illustrations, as well as the popular Jumeau doll, were mobilised by adults as a means of acculturation, specifically in terms of sanctioning gendered notions of identity and social existence. Drawing upon the child's natural existence beyond the 'black-and-white' stipulations of the adult world, and in the grey 'shadowlands' in between, *in tandem* with considering emerging ideas of the shadow as symbolic of a person's soul, this chapter examines how the adult-centricity of French long-nineteenth society, reflected in the artwork of Édouard Manet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, contributed to the establishment of the image and concept of the toy-child in artistic and material culture, and the resulting degradation of the child to an empty shell of ideals.

Finally, following a brief consideration of children in amongst the ripples of French feminism in late-nineteenth century art, namely in the work of Mary Cassatt, Chapter Six focuses on the emerging autonomy of the child, and acknowledgment of the wisdom thereof, by first exploring the creative possibilities offered in the magical 'shadowland' of child's play. This is developed by investigating the changing role and significance of the shadow in art, particularly that of Symbolists such as Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Félix Vallotton, and Adolphe Willette, as symbolic of not only personhood, but also the wistful and undulating ephemerality of childhood and life in general, as increasingly prominent in the collective conscious with the rapid onset of modernity. Drawing upon the examples of dancer

Loïe Fuller and related art, especially that of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and J.M. Barrie's character Peter Pan (first conceived in 1902), this chapter's case studies focus on artistic and literary representations of the early-twentieth century idea of the shadow child as the symbol and embodiment of both the duality and ephemerality of modern life, before investigating how such concepts and concerns brought about a fascination with what the condition of childhood may offer the modern man on both creative and philosophical levels.

At this point, it is worth clarifying the chronological and geographical parameters of the thesis. The term 'long-nineteenth century' is by its very nature not strictly fixed, but is probably most commonly understood, in line with Eric Hobsbawm's definition, to refer to the period between the French Revolution of 1789 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, other prominent brackets exist, such as Peter N. Stearns' more generalised version of 1750 to 1914.<sup>8</sup> Religious contexts, specifically those within the realm of the Catholic Church, stipulate a stretch from the French Revolution in 1789 to the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958.<sup>9</sup> Broader still is the more modern, globally-applicable ideas which have suggested the period from 1750 until 1950 to be the most appropriate perimeters.<sup>10</sup> In the case of this thesis, I use the term 'long-nineteenth century' not in a stringently fixed way, but in a general sense in order to encompass the years

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<sup>7</sup> Hobsbawm's analysis of the long-nineteenth century spans three books: *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), and *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> Peter N. Stearns, Michael Adas, Stuart B. Schwartz, and Jason Gilbert (eds.), *World Civilisations: The Global Experience* (Upper Saddle River: Longman, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Edmund Burke proposed this new definition in a paper given at the World History Workshop at the University of California in 2000, which was later published: "Modernity's Histories: Rethinking the Long Nineteenth Century, 1750-1850", June 2004, World History Workshop E-Repository Ebook, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2k62f464>.

surrounding the main century of focus; broadly speaking, the long-nineteenth century to which this thesis refers can be understood as ranging from around the mid late-eighteenth century to the mid early-twentieth century. Geographically speaking, whilst the thesis is firmly located in a French context of literary and visual culture, it nevertheless occasionally draws, when appropriate, from the wider European context, such as Britain and Germany, in order to obtain a fulsome grasp of certain wide-reaching concepts, influences, and topics. All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated, and where possible, the original language has been included alongside its English translation. A notable exception to this is in the case of particularly long passages of text, for example those of Proust, where for the purposes of clarity and flow only the English has been provided and the original French omitted.

In summary, imbued with the ongoing and undulating metaphor of the shadow, this thesis analyses how and in what ways the experiences, images, and conceptual journey of the child in the French long-nineteenth century, developing from its burgeoning scholarly inception in the Enlightenment and Romantic crossover to its popular championing in the midst of modernism, can be understood through the literary and visual culture of the period as reflective of a ‘shadowland’ existence, and in turn how the shadow comes to symbolise both the child itself and its complex, changeable condition.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *From the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Revisiting the Shadows*

“Children forget, and therefore childhood is forgotten.”  
Larry Wolff, *When I Imagine a Child*<sup>11</sup>

“Les hommes [...] ils s’enfourment dans les rapides, mais ils ne savent plus ce qu’ils cherchent” – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*<sup>12</sup>

When historians refer to the ‘discovery’ of childhood, as a state and concept, it is as though it is something akin to an archaeological excavation or attic-room unearthing of some mysterious never-before-seen gem; carefully dusting off its delicate features as it is brought out from its dark, shadowy enclave into the illuminated expanse of the outside world. Typically, this has taken the form of “an increasingly subtle awareness of differences between children and adults, of what was most essentially childlike about children [and] an increasingly compelling recognition of children as individuals, distinct from one another”, a gradual emergence of which began according to French historian Philippe Ariès, with “a Renaissance ‘discovery’ of childhood.”<sup>13</sup> Whilst Larry Wolff argues that the Renaissance acknowledgement of the child “corresponded to a proliferation in the cultural representations of children, in literary and artistic forms”, Peter Coveney contests that if cultural portrayals are to be our yardstick, it was not until the last decades of the eighteenth century that the child became firmly established as a

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<sup>11</sup> Larry Wolff, “When I Imagine a Child: The Idea of Childhood and the Philosophy of Memory in the Enlightenment”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1998), 384

<sup>12</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1999), 84. Translation: “People start out on express trains, but they no longer know what they’re looking for.” Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Egmont UK Ltd, 2013), 69.

<sup>13</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 380.

thematic mainstay as opposed to “absent, or the occasion of a passing reference, at the most a subsidiary element in an adult world.”<sup>14 15</sup> Scientific corroboration was even less forthcoming, with “paediatrics [...] founded as a distinct field of medicine [only] during the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, by which time there likewise had emerged in France a new so-called science of child rearing called *puériculture*.”<sup>16</sup> Michael Morpurgo maintains that even today “prevalent still is the notion that childhood is simply a stage on the road to adulthood.”<sup>17</sup> More significant than these chronological landmarks of discovery and awareness however is the ongoing debate and exploratory endeavours which ensued from the topic’s very advent, evidenced when English cleric Thomas Becon mused in 1550, “what is a child, or to be a child?”<sup>18</sup>

In exploration of this, this chapter provides an extensive introduction to the topic of the thesis as a whole. By beginning at the end, so to speak, this chapter makes clear the result in the twentieth century that the rest of the thesis seeks to map and explain through a series of thematic studies focused on concepts developed over the course of the long-nineteenth century. This process begins by unpacking historical and contemporary classifications of childhood, analysing efforts to neatly classify in black and white what is an innately unruly and rather blurred and shadowy concept and topic. Discussion then turns to how this inherent ambiguity was distilled into a sort of malleability which gave rise to the deep-seated proclivity

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<sup>14</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 380.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 29.

<sup>16</sup> Marilyn R. Brown, “Introduction: Baudelaire between Rousseau and Freud” in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Morpurgo, “Foreword” in Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>18</sup> Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 12.

amongst adults to shape children and childhood as beings, images, and concepts for their own ends. Specifically in the context of twentieth-century artistic and literary culture, this took the form of a modernist harnessing of the child as an antidote to modernity. Accordingly, this chapter then investigates the ways in which this manifested itself, considering the role of artists such as Paul Cézanne, Henri Rousseau, Paul Klee, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, and Pablo Picasso in the establishment of the child and childhood as the blueprint for modernist art practice, with a particular focus on the relationship between concepts of childhood and Primitivism. The chapter concludes in analysis of the conflation of the child and the ‘primitive’ by turning to Blaise Cendrars’ modernist text *La Féticheuse* (*The Shadow*) as a means by which to exemplify the ongoing ‘otherisation’ of the child, the process and effects of which reached its peak with modernism and which can be symbolised most effectively with the image and metaphor of the shadow.

Attempts to delineate childhood adopted, in the first instance at least, a very age-based focus, with scholars racing to offer age brackets or distinguishable milestones by which childhood could be precisely defined. For example, Paul Furfey understood the “forgotten age”, that is, the age of childhood, to be between the ages of six and fourteen years, beyond infancy and before adolescence. However, Bette Goldstone wrote that although “seven was supposedly the age of reason” from the medieval period onwards, the benchmark invention of the printing press provided an additional dimension of cultural and educational clout, albeit invalidated by compounding issues of class, by contributing to the characterisation of the child as



not only a small person, but also someone who could not read.<sup>19 20</sup> In other words, the arrival of the printing press and its association with literacy invited characterisations of the child by categories beyond those defined merely by age.

In 1928, O.H. Benson proposed four ‘ages’ of childhood, known as the ‘knee age’, the ‘me age’, the ‘we age’, and the ‘mating age’, and defined them thus respectively: “the age when childhood solves all of its problems of good or ill at or on mother’s knee [...] the period when the child wants much and gives but little [...] the particular period in the life of the child when they get lonesome and when they want to have companionship with other children [...] the dawning of adolescent [and] the most beautiful age of the whole life of the human being.”<sup>21</sup> This notion of a phasic progression through childhood is one which has pervaded much of the subject’s contemporary discourse, not least in discussions of the increasingly popular and similarly indeterminable period of ‘youth’, broadly understood as “a phase which post-dates childhood and precedes the period of ‘settling down’.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly of interest are concepts of the vital periods which encompass the composition and development of self and society, during which focus is placed on the construction and expression of identity.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, children may be said to partake in a form of “liminal phase of ritual as the creative playing with the structure

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<sup>19</sup> P.H. Furfey, “The Forgotten Age of Childhood”, *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (1935), 458.

<sup>20</sup> Bette P. Goldstone, “Views of Childhood in Children’s Literature Over Time”, *Language Arts*, Vol. 63, No. 8 (1986), 792-793.

<sup>21</sup> O.H. Benson, “Four Ages of Childhood”, *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 107, No. 16 (1928), 470-471.

<sup>22</sup> A. McRobbie, “Dance and Social Fantasy” in *Gender and Generation*, eds. A. McRobbie and M. Nava (London: MacMillan, 1984), 146.

<sup>23</sup> C. Duff, “Drugs and youth culture: Is Australia experiencing the ‘normalisation’ of adolescent drug use?” *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2003), 442.

of reality and society, and the separation and aggregation phase representing the structure and authority of the society.”<sup>24</sup>

From Arnold van Gennep’s coining of the term “rites of passage” in 1909 to describe the transitional stages of a person’s life emerged the concept of liminality, and in turn the three distinct, principal liminal stages of separation, segregation (or liminality), and integration (or incorporation).<sup>25</sup> Separation is characterised by the splitting off of an individual from a given fixed and recognisable state or structure, a withdrawal from a status usually marked by some sort of symbolic behaviour or practice. Segregation (or liminality), comprises the period between the two polar states, during which one has left the previous but not yet gained entry to the next, and is thus innately ambiguous. Finally, integration (or incorporation) marks the completion of the particular rite, whereby the individual can assume their new identity and re-enter society with this status. In his aptly-named essay ‘Betwixt and Between’, Victor Turner offers his definition of these interstructural stages:

“The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a ‘state’); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the ‘passenger’) is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of

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<sup>24</sup> F. Beccaria and A. Sande, “Drinking games and rite of life projects: A social comparison of the meaning and functions of young people’s use of alcohol during the rite of passage to adulthood in Italy and Norway”, *Young*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2003), 103.

<sup>25</sup> J. Northcote, “Nightclubbing and the search for identity: Making the transition from Childhood to Adulthood in an urban milieu”, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2006), 5.

the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated.”<sup>26</sup>

In other words, as a period during which ‘initiates’ – that is to say children not yet initiated into the ‘proper’ world of adulthood – are ostracized from the rest of society in a complex social enactment that is both physical and psychological, they are thus rendered a hazy, shadowy sheath of a person barely visible to others. And so it stands to reason that “at the liminal stage [one] has nothing – no status, proper rank, or kinship position” and is afforded no tangible state of being which is stable and culturally recognized.<sup>27</sup> Definable as the transformation warranted as a result of any number of major life milestones and crises as much as that in reaction to smaller, more nuanced alterations and shifts in society, culture, and relationships, the liminal stage is broadly the swathes of grey between two given points of black and white, the expanse of shadow which lies between two solid positions, and thus ultimately, perhaps, the “movement of a man through his lifetime, from a fixed placental placement within his mother’s womb to his death and ultimate fixed point of his tombstone.”<sup>28</sup>

This in turn points to the tendency, as members of society, to not only see what we are conditioned and expect to see, but also our blinkeredness in favour of the fixed and tangible over the fluid and transitional, that is to say, our inclination towards that which can be physically seen and understood over that which is abstract

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<sup>26</sup> Victor W. Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*” in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, eds. Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1985), 47.

<sup>27</sup> Lehmann and Myers, *Magic, Witchcraft*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> William Lloyd Warner, *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 303.

and theoretical. Turner's likening of the transformational nature of the liminal stage to that of the pupa changing from grub to moth exemplifies this, offering a symbolic link to the biological processes by which the conceptual processes of the liminal persona were characterised, giving easily-identifiable outward manifestation to a more complex inward occurrence, in line with Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory on isomorphism.<sup>29</sup> This bias towards the concrete and palpable over the transitory and imperceptible, this preference for the grounded certitude of black and white posts over the floating undulations of the grey shadow in between, is archetypal of both scholarly and practical approaches to children and childhood. It is the root cause, through its determinedness to ruthlessly colour-code, of the misperceptions and general erroneousness which consistently suffuses studies and understandings of childhood and children.

Amongst this palpable sense of “tension between ‘beings’ and ‘becomings’”, in this seemingly infinite expanse of shadow in which children reside, the boundaries are as blurred as their adult creators are in disagreement about such definitions.<sup>30</sup> In the same way that there is no one fixed time-scale, “no one ceremony or ritual [...] in which we leave childhood and move to something beyond”, the issue of liminality proves equally ambiguous on a semantic level when we consider that “we use the word ‘child’ in different senses: a child can cease to be one with time, but we are always a child of our parents.”<sup>31</sup> This relationship-dynamic of the perpetual child provides some indication of the extent to which childhood is subject to the meandering dictatorship of adult control: “it has always

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<sup>29</sup> Turner, “Betwixt and Between”, 47-48.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Thomas Cook, “A politics of becoming: When ‘child’ is not enough”, *Childhood*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 14.

been adults (grown-up children, that is [...]) who have sought to define childhood, or more often to negate it, or to exploit it, and sometimes to idealise it.”<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, “if children themselves have in some ways changed over time, much more subject to change have been ideas about childhood”, meaning that our perceptions thereof, historically and retrospectively, are invariably coloured in degrees by the lasting influence of the defining values and concepts of biopsychological development in given social and institutional structures.<sup>33</sup> Childhood, Goldstone explains “[...] is not a biological fact. Rather it is a social contrived state of being [with perimeters] determined by the culture: by interweaving economic factors, philosophical and religious issues, and socio-historic events [...] The concept of childhood is dynamic, changing to fit the needs of the community.”<sup>34</sup> For example, aside from its confinement to the approved *bain culturel*, long-nineteenth-century French childhood was typified by a combination of a particularly extensive use of wet nurses, resulting in “a significant proportion of French infants fac[ing] an extended period of separation from their mothers.”<sup>35</sup> Consequently, ‘maternal love’ appeared to be “a feeling that ebbed and flowed [...] according to social custom.”<sup>36</sup>

In these pockets of evidence we find indicators of the adult-centricity of the child’s world, of its malleability in the eyes of those who survey it, and yet also its simultaneous rigidity for those most afflicted but also least able to effect change: children. More contemporary scholars continued to explore such circumstances;

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<sup>32</sup> Morpurgo, “Foreword”, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Goldstone, “Views of Childhood”, 792.

<sup>35</sup> Colin Heywood, *Growing Up in France: From the Ancien Régime to the Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 127. ‘Bain culturel’ (‘cultural bath’) refers to the process by which the middle and upper classes exposed their children only to a very select and closed circle of family and friends in order to tailor their opinions and habits free from outside influence.

<sup>36</sup> Élisabeth Badinter in Heywood, *Growing Up*, 116. Élisabeth Badinter is a French philosopher and historian who has written extensively on feminism and women’s role in society.

whilst Simone de Beauvoir frequently described a child's freedom as "socially mediated", Michel Foucault went so far as to underline the dogged lack of compromise inherent to adults when he queried "if the child is born a monster [...] should we regard the child as having been born or not?", pointing to the complete denial of manifestations beyond the defined mould.<sup>37 38</sup>

Foucault's comment can be understood to refer, beyond basic levels of adult control over children, to a more acute practice in which childhood as a concept becomes a discovery and trope of adult convenience. Whilst it is broadly considered the case that children, either ignorant of or wilfully reticent towards unfolding and neatly documenting their secrets and experiences, "rarely leave [...] evidence that would enable us to know what it had been like to be a child", adults have taken advantage of this, snatching the opportunity to write their own histories and the futures of others.<sup>39</sup> Convenient discovery or calculated invention, the adult pursuit of childhood culminates in "adults imagining childhood, inventing it, in order to make sense of their world [while] children have to live with the consequences."<sup>40</sup> In his 1897 novel *What Maisie Knew*, a condemning scrutiny of the experiences of the malleable child at the hands of irresponsible and self-serving adults, Henry James (1843-1916) summarised thus how the child was excluded from its own experiences, memories, and sense of personhood for the sake of adult scheme: "she found in her

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<sup>37</sup> Simone de Beauvoir quoted in Sally J. Scholz, "That All Children Should Be Free: Beauvoir, Rousseau, and Childhood", *Hypatia*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2010), 400.

<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Verso Publishing, 2003), 65.

<sup>39</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

mind a collection of images and echoes kept for her in the childish dusk, a dim closet, the high drawers, like games she was not yet big enough to play.”<sup>41</sup>

In much the same way that Maisie represents the child of modernity, “a mite of a half-infant in a great dim theatre” show of divorce, little more than a “‘shuttlecock’ in adult quarrels”, the child in general, as both a person and a concept, became a most popular trope in the modern adult’s pursuit of resolution.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>43</sup> In France particularly, this was buoyed by an obsession around the turn of the twentieth century with personal writings and exploratory artworks concerned with “passing time, preserving time, recovering time, [and] reflecting on time.”<sup>44</sup> This habitual sense of introversion by which late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century French artistic and literary culture was characterised can be viewed in tandem with what Andrew Graham-Dixon describes as a propensity to “become culturally inward looking, [to adopt] a ‘petit France’ mentality” in this period.<sup>45</sup> Such was the fixation with self and personhood, as well as the prolificacy of creative production which increasingly buttressed introspectiveness as opposed to artist-to-artist and artist-to-public conversation, “art [was now] a person locked up in their own sense of being [...] art of solipsism, art of the monologue.”<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, the various prongs which sprouted from this epoch’s overflowing feeling of *fin-de-siècle* pessimism towards “a world given increasingly to utilitarian values and the Machine [...] in [a] society actively de-naturing

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<sup>41</sup> Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2000), 16.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>43</sup> Pat Righelato, “Introduction” in James, *What Maisie Knew*, vi.

<sup>44</sup> Michèle Hannoosh, “Chapter One: A painter’s impression of modernity: Delacroix, citizen of the nineteenth century” in *Impressions of French Modernity: Art and Literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Art in France: This is the Modern World* (television programme), BBC4 (UK), February 14, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

humanity” and simultaneously promoting a billowing sense of isolation and doubt, found themselves united by the antidote-like appeal of the child in all its manifestations.<sup>47</sup> Reminiscent of James’ Maisie’s convenience as a “ready vessel for bitterness, a deep little porcelain cup in which biting acids could be mixed” by the adults around her, the child was susceptible to an array of interpretations and styles courtesy of the melting pot of adult design, rendering the child “so congenial an image, either of growth or regression, of potency or regret.”<sup>48 49</sup> Referring to William Empson’s notion of the ‘tap-root’ when describing the fashion amongst turn-of-the-century artists and writers to make use of the image of the child, and most specifically experiences from one’s own childhood, as a means of both distraction and inspiration, Coveney summarised how childhood as a concept became:

“... a habitual means of escape, a way of withdrawal from spiritual and emotional confusion in a tired culture [and how] In an age when it became increasingly difficult to grow up, to find valid bearings in an adult world, [there is] the temptation [...] to take the line of least emotional resistance, and to regress, quite literally, into a world of fantasy and nostalgia for childhood. [Not only did] the child become a symbol of the greatest significance for the subjective investigation of the Self, and an expression of [...] protest against the Experience of society [but also] a symbol of retreat into personal regression and self-pity.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 31.

<sup>48</sup> James, *What Maisie Knew*, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



The latter decades of the nineteenth century saw a gradual glorification of regression, in France by Arthur Rimbaud's 'cult of childhood' and efforts to "retain the 'man-child' within", and in Britain with John Ruskin's encouragement to recover "the innocence of the eye" in order to produce artistic representations with the fresh vitality of the child.<sup>51 52</sup> Such thoughts and practices had reached fever pitch by the turn of the century, when the inevitable decay of living could be thwarted by an artistic and literary return to one's youth: "Childhood [...] was something you had to keep alive in yourself or else you would [...] become to all intents and purposes dead. [It] could also become a place to which to escape, where one could avoid growing up."<sup>53</sup> However, the self-serving origins of such regression, the self-centredness of this particular adumbration of the child, inevitably facilitated a convenient and self-indulgent embracing of the nescient self as a means of both handily relinquishing responsibility whilst simultaneously creating an intellectual or artistic platform by which to elevate the perceived significance of one's own 'childish' musings:

"In writing of the child, their interest was continuously adult [...] In talking of the child, they were talking of life [for] the child indeed becomes a means of escape from the pressures of adult adjustment, a means of regression towards the irresponsibility of youth, childhood, infancy, and ultimately nescience itself [...] a regressive escape into the emotional prison

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<sup>51</sup> Alessandra Comini, "Toys in Freud's attic: torment and taboo in the child and adolescent themes of Vienna's image-makers" in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 173.

<sup>52</sup> John Ruskin quoted in Christopher Turner, "Art Toys: Through the eyes of a child", *Tate Etc.*, No. 19 (2010), <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/tate-etc-issue-19>.

<sup>53</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 149.

of self-limiting nostalgia [...] a denial of responsibility [for] certain artists as the end of the century [who] were [...] very much abroad in an alien world [afflicted with] 'nostalgia' [...] on the one hand a healthy and on the other a generally sick sensibility.”<sup>54</sup>

It is thus unsurprising that the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought “a wealth of ‘ego documents’”, swathes of literature imbued with personal memories, whose colouration of time and the author’s own design distilled accounts warped by an unfathomable tangle of remembrance and imagining which can be understood by reference to Roland Barthes’ notion of the ‘death of the author’, whereby the author is no longer the creator of the book, but the two formed in tandem.<sup>55</sup> This propensity to wilfully or otherwise distort and invent autobiographical accounts, both literary and artistic, was amplified by what became a veritable competition amongst writers to record the earliest memory, to thus demonstrate themselves as the closest and most in touch with childhood. This was cemented further by the attribution of the melancholy of these pioneering archaeologists of childhood reminiscences to the sorrow associated with maternal loss or separation.<sup>56</sup>

And so whilst “the impulse towards self-gratification through literary confession” was palpable, with a perceived vividness of childhood memories so strong that “chronology is overturned and the adult becomes a child”, this hedonism is matched by an eagerness to reshape the past according to one’s needs or fancy.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 240-242.

<sup>55</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 17.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-94.

<sup>57</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 378.

Consequently, the opacity and mystery of childhood, combined with its loaded harnessing in artistic and literary circles, gave rise to something resembling a profitable trade in counterfeit memories, by which the adult search for ‘self’ was not only enabled in the first place, but laid the foundations for a modern reworking of childhood in a conceptual, collective sense, as much as on a personal level:

“Introspective remembrance [...] as an element in the history of childhood [produced] the child who waited to be discovered within each adult as an aspect of self [...] Pursuing an empirical psychology of memory and a literary art of memoir, the philosophes sought to establish the remembered sense of self, which became the philosophical and sentimental cornerstone of the modern construction of childhood [...] Writing on white paper [...] gradually emerging from blankness, straddling the threshold of memory [...] the force of [which] is such that the thing remembered ‘can be made an actual perception again’, an almost hallucinatory character qualified only by the ‘consciousness that it had been there before’.”<sup>58</sup>

Drawing from the significance of painful childhood experiences by which Carol Mavor’s notion of “umbilical indexicality” is bound, that is to say, the scar left behind by our physical and emotional connection to mother (as discussed at length in Chapter Four), is just one example of the way in which writers and artists of the French long-nineteenth century sought to revisit and ‘correct’ experiences from

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<sup>58</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 381-383.

infancy.<sup>59</sup> There is something to be said here for the significance of Freud's "strange phenomenon of the 'repetition compulsion' [...] the need to re-enact painful experiences in words or acts [...] to master a situation which in its original form had been too much for him by meeting it repeatedly and of his own accord" in terms of its applicability to the modern adult approach to childhood, and specifically in relation to the adult reworking of difficult or inconvenient childhood memories.<sup>60</sup> Roger Fry similarly refers to "the possibility of a double life; the actual life [and] the other imaginative life", through the latter of which we may somehow re-envision ourselves and our past for the ultimate amelioration, or mere avoidance, of the former.<sup>61</sup> Such a practice proved common amongst artists and writers of this period; whether they sought to open old wounds, fashion a fictitiously happy childhood, or simply return to a seemingly simpler time, "what counts is what their experiences meant to them; *his* or *her* truth rather than *the* truth."<sup>62</sup> For many, literature and art on this topic was a vehicle of avoidance and escape, as Barthes declared, "my stories are a way of shutting my eyes."<sup>63</sup> J.M. Barrie went further, attributing Peter Pan's otherworldly talent for flying as symbolic of "escape artistry, [of] childish flight, of being with the stars, of being a bird, [and] of not being a man."<sup>64</sup>

Regardless of the specifics, this period's particular overflowing of nostalgia was characterised by the formation of "an idealised past with an unsatisfactory

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<sup>59</sup> Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 254.

<sup>60</sup> E.H. Erikson, *Childhood And Society* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 1995), 194.

<sup>61</sup> Roger Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics" in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), 12.

<sup>62</sup> Richard N. Coe, *When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 79-80.

<sup>63</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 53.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Hollindale, ed., *J.M. Barrie: Peter Pan and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 92.

present.”<sup>65</sup> Derived from the Greek terms ‘nóstos’ (‘homecoming’) and ‘álgos’ (‘pain’), “nostalgia, then, is a form of melancholy that wells up as a yearning for home, that throbs as an ache”, and considering its original seventeenth-century classification as a disease, alongside its cultural pervasiveness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is possibly some credence to be found in the query “is nostalgia contagious?”<sup>66</sup> Like a euthanasic disease whose acquisition offers deliverance from the pain of living a modern reality, nostalgia nevertheless inflicts the suffering of its symptoms and is ultimately derived from some misfortune in the first place, or as Mavor terms it “life’s succession of losses [which] begins in childhood.”<sup>67</sup> It is in response to this loss felt in adulthood that we yearn to recover, or refill, what is lamented, coveted, or resented from childhood by the oppressive onset of modernity. From Stendhal musing in circa 1835 that “next to the clearest mental pictures I find *gaps* in this memory, it’s like a fresco, large parts of which have fallen away”, to contemporary artist Christian Boltanski declaring in 2002 that “we make art to [...] find childhood lost”, the role of art and other creative processes in the practice of self-discovery and nostalgic re-imaginings of childhoods past cannot be underestimated.<sup>68 69</sup>

Whilst the most common pathway to such deliverance seemed to be a re-engagement with childhood, especially one’s own, Ernst Gombrich was eager to point out that this modernist regression was not to be achieved simply at will and by anyone, for many artists and writers negated the seemingly prophetic philosophy of

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<sup>65</sup> George K. Behlmer and Fred M. Leventhal, eds., *Singular Continuities: Transition, Nostalgia, and Identity in Modern British Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 42, 434.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>68</sup> Stendhal, *The Life of Henry Brulard*, trans. John Sturrock (New York: New York Review Books, 2002), 128.

<sup>69</sup> Christian Boltanski, “Studio’s Visit: Christian Boltanski”, *Tate Magazine*, Issue 2, Nov/Dec 2002.

their endeavours when “their frantic wish to become childlike drove [them] merely to exercises in calculated silliness.”<sup>70</sup> Some, however, managed to orchestrate such a practice to their advantage, turning this propensity for aimless foolishness on its head and transforming the topic into a farce which sought to expose the incredulity of modern man that lay at the very heart of this modernist urge to retreat, reconsider, and recompense. One such example is Alfred Jarry’s controversial 1896 play *Ubu Roi*, “a preposterous farce, an anarchic parody [whose] uninhibited tastelessness is practically sublime.”<sup>71</sup> A precursor to Dada, Surrealism, and the Theatre of the Absurd, *Ubu Roi* is considered pivotal in the emergence of modernism in the twentieth century.<sup>72</sup> What began, in its first inception during Jarry’s teenage years, as “a schoolboy’s caricature of one of his professors who personified for him all the ugliness in the world”, transformed into a highly symbolic work of literature.<sup>73</sup> Beneath the farcical façade of scatological humour and a nonsensical orchestra comprising “sausages [...] flageolets [and] fipple-flutes”, is a satirical critique of modernity which moves beyond the “merely frivolous, [...] obscene nonsense of schoolboys [to] express something deeper, an inner consciousness in a way that is similar to the Symbolists, a group Jarry had befriended.”<sup>74 75</sup>

Almost as ridiculous as his main character, whose name produced the derivative ‘Ubuesque’ meaning ‘ludicrous’ or ‘absurd’, was Jarry’s literary style and insightful approach, which, said to be underpinned by “pataphysics – the science of

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<sup>70</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2007), 598.

<sup>71</sup> Beverly Keith and G. Legman, “Note” in Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi*, trans. Beverly Keith and G. Legman (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), v.

<sup>72</sup> David Ball, “UBU-ing a Theatre-Translation: Defense and Illustration”, *Metamorphoses, a Journal of Literary Translation* (Smith College), 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Jarry, “Preface” in *Ubu Roi*, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Jarry, *Ubu Roi*, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre: 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993), 24.

the realm beyond metaphysics” was as ambiguous as this literary trope was enigmatic in definition.<sup>76 77</sup> Ultimately, most significant was the dualistic symbolism by which Jarry’s lead was characterised. Not only did “Ubu [come] to embody every despicable quality: he is pompous, vain, cruel, stupid, murderous, cowardly, greedy, and authoritarian – altogether an exemplary authority figure”, but his allegorisation extended beyond that of the modern man.<sup>78</sup> Being that the “central character is notorious for his infantile engagement with his world, [for] Ubu inhabits a domain of greedy self-gratification”, he not only symbolises modern man, but also some of those of modernism who sought to harness the child as a vehicle in their own quest for both regressive redemption and a profound sense of selfhood.<sup>79</sup>

It is perhaps in this literature’s bifold approach to modernity and its relationship with perceived traits of children and childhood which is most significant. Buttressed by the author’s own woodblock print illustrations (fig. 1.1) whose ‘primitive’ style pre-empt a connection with the modernist-child concept, the play’s amalgamation of the whimsical and the serious, the unreliable and the authentic, the make-believe and the real, and the ridiculous and the noble, effectively embodies the appeal of and difficulty in the harnessing of the child and its conceptual state as key emblems representing the regressive yet reactionary ethos of the emerging modernist movement: “childhood [is] simultaneously honest and faithful, fanciful and steeped in imagination.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Keith and Legman, “Note”, vi.

<sup>77</sup> Phillip G. Hill, *Our Dramatic Heritage (Vol. 6)* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), 30.

<sup>78</sup> Keith and Legman, “Note”, v.

<sup>79</sup> Jane Taylor, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2007), iii.

<sup>80</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 254.

When Linda Nochlin defined Realism as “the demand for contemporaneity and nothing but contemporaneity”, she consequently offered some insight into the movement which sought to rally against it: modernism.<sup>81</sup> In opposition to the acceptance of contemporary existence as seen and recorded by the realists, modernists rejected the notion of a fixed state of contemporaneity in favour of a process by which one is in a permanent flux of self-conscious revision and partaking in a progressive trend of thought that encourages and facilitates human capacity to create and reshape. Marshall Berman summarises the process thus:

“In the twentieth century, the social processes that bring this maelstrom into being, and keep it in a state of perpetual becoming, have come to be called ‘modernization’. These world-historical processes have nourished an amazing variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that it changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own. Over the past century, these visions and values have come to be loosely grouped together under the name of ‘modernism’.”<sup>82</sup>

Accordingly, the modernist approach has more than once been likened to “unlearning [as] a device that was supposed to unwrap the truth of things” all the

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<sup>81</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1971), 25.

<sup>82</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 16.



while not forgetting that “unlearning without relearning is meaningless.”<sup>83</sup> The modernist ethos affords a relinquishment of outdated values previously learned in favour of a persistent and ongoing replenishment of new, more self-consciously considered ones in what Colin Rhodes calls “the act of undressing symbolised [whereby] the removal of the complex social masks imposed by modern urban culture” allows for the garbing of oneself in any number of changing outfits.<sup>84</sup>

This notion of undressing and a return to the physical and cultural beginnings of nakedness not only points to the major theme of the ‘primitive’ to be explored thoroughly later in this chapter, but also to the image of the child, a fresh and unadorned newborn as the very symbol of beginnings. This image, alongside the notion of unlearning, combines to furnish the notion which, not unlike aspects of ‘Rousseauian’ theory, states that by virtue of its lack of educational sully, the child houses unrivalled acumen: “Every level of learning begins with childhood [and] for that reason, the wisest man on earth so closely resembles a child.”<sup>85</sup> It seemed as though by regressing to the beginning, to unlearn all that modernity had encumbered upon one, one could rediscover “a state of infancy [which] preceded conscious existence” from which to commence the modernist process.<sup>86</sup>

More generally though, this modernist excavation and rebuilding of oneself through childhood pointed to the gravitas by which the child was becoming characterised in the modern era, not least as a result of its universality and applicability to each and every one of us: “childhood – whether as a source for modern artists, as the locus of art pedagogy, as a metaphor or as a lever into

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<sup>83</sup> Werner Hofmann, “The Art of Unlearning” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>84</sup> Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 38.

<sup>85</sup> Novalis, “Blutenstaub” in Gerhard Schulz (ed.), *Novalis Werke* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1969), 333.

<sup>86</sup> Comini, “Freud’s attic”, 173.

fundamental qualities of the human mind – is something we all have in common, and its preserving influence on modern art speaks to the fundamentally human questions that motivate the work of modern artists.”<sup>87</sup>

The emergence of the modernist child was gradual and built upon a plethora of foundation blocks which accumulated over the previous century or so. Testament to this, in anticipation of the impending modernist backlash against modernity, is Charles Baudelaire’s positing of the concepts of *naïveté* and *curiosité* as early as 1846. Not only did he deem these ideas, especially *naïveté*, to be “key to his definition of modern ways of seeing”, but they established a grounding from which the modernist child would develop, not least in his conception of unlearning: “*Naïveté* [...] is primarily about the artist’s self-expression, about his capacity to peel off the layers of academic learning and cultural condition in order to realise his own *tempérament* as fully as possible [and] *curiosité*, by contrast, is about a mode of engagement with the external world, and its corollary is [...] *modernité*.”<sup>88</sup>

Compelled by the twists and turns of the Parisian avant-garde in the early-twentieth century, artist and art critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) was captivated not only by the growing presence in modern art and literature of themes related to childhood, but significantly also by the alternative vision offered by the child itself as a contributor to visual culture, especially its unfettered insight: “we were given our eyes to see things, not to look at them.”<sup>89</sup> Most particularly, Fry was struck by the child’s capacity to use their imagination in a profoundly creative manner, bringing everyday objects and conjured figments to life through art and thus

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<sup>87</sup> Jonathan Fineberg, “Foreword” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), xxii.

<sup>88</sup> John House, “Curiosité” in *Impressions of French Modernity: Art and Literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 33-34.

<sup>89</sup> Roger Fry “The Artist’s Vision” in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), 31.

establishing a crucial link between the imaginative and creative spheres: “art, then, is, if I am right, the chief organ of the imaginative life, it is by art that it is stimulated and controlled within us, and [...] the imaginative life is distinguished by the greater clearness of its perception, and the greater purity and freedom of its emotion.”<sup>90</sup>

Fry accredits much of this ability to the child’s propensity to form attachments to inanimate objects and environments as much as to other people, a “habit of attributing strong emotional values to all the objects surrounding them [until their] visual life was so intense that the smallest change in the arrangement of a room, the smallest new object introduced into the house, was an event of thrilling import” and such creative weight.<sup>91</sup> Whilst many scholars and artists believed in a link between children and nature, extending this to the assertion that it was from the latter that the former drew creative inspiration, Fry was more convinced by the idea of the inspiration of childhood and child art itself working in tandem with a reflection of the self, whereby “the frame of the mirror makes its surface a very rudimentary work of art.”<sup>92</sup> In other words, untaught artistic practice amongst children is demonstrative of the unrestricted personhood of its maker, as “children, if left to themselves, never [...] ‘draw from nature’, but express, with a delightful freedom and sincerity, the mental images which make up their own imaginative lives.”<sup>93</sup>

Such focus on selfhood and individuality invites the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose criticism of modern man’s inclination towards what he termed the “herd instinct” proved influential in the understanding of late-nineteenth and early-

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<sup>90</sup> Fry, “Essay in Aesthetics”, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Roger Fry, “Children’s Drawings”, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 30, No. 171 (1917), 226.

<sup>92</sup> Fry, “Essay in Aesthetics”, 13.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

twentieth century avant-garde art and literature.<sup>94</sup> Infuriated by this ‘herd instinct’, this modern inclination towards blindly behaving and thinking like the majority, Nietzsche implored that “one must renounce the bad taste of wishing to agree with many people.”<sup>95</sup> Instead, one must liberate one’s mind to a freer way of thinking and behaving, to escape the confines of the herd, ultimately giving rise to the sort of modernist output that found the individuality and perceived freshness of childhood an enormous creative influence, both as a conceptual theme and a blueprint for artistic practice: “I’m youth, I’m joy, I’m a little bird that has broken out of his egg!”<sup>96</sup>

The establishment of the child as a symbolic trope of modernism, as well as the emergence of the “childlike as a stylistic ideal of avant-garde art” manifested itself multifariously.<sup>97</sup> It is worth noting here that it often seems the case that, symptomatic of longstanding underestimations of the child, “children’s drawings are referred to as though they were a standardised product [when really their] output is almost as varied as that of adults.”<sup>98</sup> This is typical of the way adults not only generalised their understanding of children and childhood in a fashion that was neglectful of personhood and difference, but also their proclivity to make something of an almost fetishistic novelty of the perceived features and tendencies of children and their state. Although it is true that “more than once in the history of Western art, there has been a return to fundamentals”, to understand the modernist interest in

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<sup>94</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 116.

<sup>95</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Helen Zimmern, 2009, Ch. 2, Project Gutenberg Ebook Online, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm>.

<sup>96</sup> J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan: The Story of Peter and Wendy* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1911), 145.

<sup>97</sup> Josef Helfenstein, “The Issue of Childhood in Klee’s Late Work” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 138.

<sup>98</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, “Beginning with the Child” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 16.

children and child art solely within these terms would be ignorant of its many features and influences.<sup>99</sup>

Modernist champions of children and the childish rallied against the “modern suspicion that playful, expressive art is intellectually shallow”, instead showcasing that, contrary to the diligent and formalist rule-following of most adult art, “children’s artistic practice was natural, sincere, and [...] disinterested.”<sup>100</sup> Whilst artistic production inspired by that of children often received the critical “charge of childishness or incompetence”, its proponents were instead struck by “the power of the child’s naïve vision to reveal truths closed to more sophisticated perception.”<sup>101</sup> Whereas adults tend to stereotype what they see, children, driven by “the spontaneity of motor behaviour”, draw precisely from life or imagination, producing a profoundly authentic rendering of personal vision unaffected by the pressures of convention or tailoring of formalist training.<sup>102</sup>

Barbara Wörwag has written of the child’s unique graphic language, “in which linear constructions express primary emotion in stark contrast”, which is typified by not only “box people, [but general] distortions of form and [...] ambiguous treatment of space.”<sup>103</sup> Not only do children “completely disregard the structural rules” which customarily restrict formal art production, but their styles and processes afford the notion of a sort of “folding out” in drawings whereby they

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<sup>99</sup> Arnheim, “Beginning with the Child”, 15.

<sup>100</sup> Richard Shiff, “From Primitivist Phylogeny to Formalist Ontogeny: Roger Fry and Children’s Drawings” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 160-161.

<sup>101</sup> Marcel Franciscono, “Paul Klee and Children’s Art” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 96, 109.

<sup>102</sup> Arnheim, “Beginning with the Child”, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Barbara Wörwag, “There is Unconscious, Vast Power in the Child: Notes on Kandinsky, Münter and Children’s Drawings” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 75.

adopt a sort of continuous picture formation that reflects the busy and unconstrained stream of consciousness that inspires it.<sup>104</sup> G.G. Pospelov agrees; firm in the belief that “children are not interested in the result [...] but in the process”, he remarks upon the strength of the child’s conceptual vision over the appeal of concrete reality that leads them to “draw not the flesh, but the contour of objects, [for] the outlines of figures on a sheet of paper attract them more than the presence of bodies.”<sup>105</sup> Considered by Meyer Schapiro to be the ultimate “source of creativity, unobscured by convention”, the child and his art, “clumsy, imperfect, the result of a struggle between the idea and the hand”, becomes the most “pure archetype of the ‘painter of modern life’”, as coined by Baudelaire.<sup>106</sup>

Accordingly, modernist artists and other creative figures, lamenting the longstanding process by which, in rather Nietzschean terms, “most children abandoned artistic anarchy and idiosyncrasy to join the utilitarian herd” once educated and ‘cultured’, sought to subvert the denigration of this authentic artistic blueprint by channelling its themes, features, and processes into their own work.<sup>107</sup> This collection of avant-garde figures, growing larger and more pervasive with time, dedicated their artistic production to “a seemingly random collection of forms, objects and creatures made to float in an undefined pictorial space so as to create a universe in miniature, [whose] brevity, its rudimentary forms, its schematic renderings of plants and figures and its reduction of a complex realm to something approaching a diagram [remained] guided by the example of children’s art” as well

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<sup>104</sup> Barbara Wörwag, “There is Unconscious”, 80.

<sup>105</sup> G.G. Pospelov, “Larionov and Children’s Drawings” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 44-49.

<sup>106</sup> Meyer Schapiro, “Courbet and Popular Imagery: An Essay on Realism and Naiveté”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 4, No.3/4 (1941), 164, 180.

<sup>107</sup> Shiff, “Primitivist Phylogeny”, 180.

as thematic concepts of children and childhood, to such an extent that the increasingly common “comparisons between modern abstraction and the symbolic work of children” were scarcely surprising.<sup>108</sup>

Whilst “modern art was – and still is – dismissed with the cliché, ‘a child could have done it’”, prominent members of the modernist avant-garde played up to this criticism, with figures such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, and Jean Dubuffet owning sizable collections of children’s art, and others choosing to exhibit children’s art.<sup>109</sup> These shared exhibitions of the work of modern artists and children provided a tangible scaffold to support the more conceptual connection between modernism and childhood, offering a concrete manifestation of the way in which artists “studied and imitated the spontaneous and wilful distortions of children’s pictures as though, like dreams, they offered a royal road to the unconscious” and the inner child in all of us.<sup>110</sup>

Such was the significance of this perceived connection between the child and the modern artist that James Sully proffered a semblance between play and creativity, positing that “the impulse of the artist has its roots in the happy semi-conscious activity of the child at play, [for both] give outer form and life to an inner idea, and [the] play impulse becomes the art-impulse”, a theory that proved a prominent mainstay in twentieth-century pedagogic study.<sup>111</sup> Whilst key figures such as Picasso (1881-1973) and Klee (1879-1940) experimented with toys, making

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<sup>108</sup> Franciscano, “Paul Klee”, 109, 103.

<sup>109</sup> Turner, “Art Toys”. Such exhibitions include the following: Oskar Kokoschka’s work was displayed next to children’s doodles at an exhibition in 1908; Alfred Stieglitz put on four exhibitions of children’s art at his 291 gallery in New York between 1912 and 1916; in 1913, Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova showed children’s drawings in the *Mishen (Target)* exhibition in Moscow; in 1917 and 1919, Roger Fry showed children’s artwork at the Omega Workshops; and in 1919, the Dada exhibition in Cologne included infantile scribbles next to Max Ernst’s works.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> James Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 1896, in Turner, “Art Toys”.

rudimentary playthings for their children, the simplistic shapes they fashioned soon became influential features of the *Cahiers d'Art* publication and Bauhaus shows respectively.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, whilst in the 1960s John Berger disparagingly accused Picasso of being “reduced to playing like a child [...] condemned to paint with nothing to say”, his pioneering Cubist style could instead be congratulated for “taking the language of western art to pieces as if it were a jigsaw puzzle.”<sup>113 114</sup>

These giant children at play, these giants of modernism, were changing the course of art production. And their work unsurprisingly interacted; like children playing together, they shared and swapped, argued and stole. Whilst Picasso acknowledged the influence his great rival Matisse (1869-1954) had upon his own work, perhaps the greatest ‘theft’ amongst these childlike artists was that which they took from children themselves.<sup>115</sup> When he declared that “the more helpless they [children] are, the more instructive their examples”, Klee revealed something of the exploitative nature of the modernist harnessing of the child.<sup>116</sup> From the practice amongst members of Der Blaue Reiter of rummaging about in children’s nurseries for inspiration, to Klee’s copying of his own son Felix’s drawings into his own work (for example in *Tent City with Blue River and Black Zig-Zag Clouds* in 1919), childhood was ransacked for its symbolic value and modernist gravitas.<sup>117</sup> Given that “Picasso is supposed to have said that all children were born with artistic

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<sup>112</sup> Turner, “Art Toys”.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Graham-Dixon, *Art in France*.

<sup>115</sup> Both produced in 1907, the form of Matisse’s *Marguerite* was said to be a great influence on the central figures of Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger*.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Klee, *Tagebucher von Paul Klee 1898-1918* (Cologne: Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1957), 276.

<sup>117</sup> Turner, “Art Toys”.



genius, but most of them forgot it”, there seems to have been some degree of urgency amongst modernist figures to extract this wisdom before it was too late.<sup>118</sup>

The inspiration of child art went beyond mere ‘child’s play’ and the appeal of just its *naïveté* and freshness of vision however. In the formation of conceptual abstract styles it would contribute what Kandinsky (1866-1944) called “the improvement and refinement of the human soul.”<sup>119</sup> Kandinsky’s particular concerns about “the nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game” points to the anxieties at the very heart of an artist whose subtly foreboding work simultaneously warned of modernity’s impending shifts and laid the foundations of the modernist deviation in artistic vision and perception – Paul Cézanne.<sup>120</sup>

When Cézanne (1839-1906) declared to Émile Bernard in 1904, “I would like to be a child”, it provided some indication of the depth of this Post-Impressionist’s significance in establishing the groundwork for the modernist uptake of the child and child-like.<sup>121</sup> For Cézanne, a painter whose subjects varied dramatically, it was not necessarily what he painted that mattered, but how he painted it. Painstakingly mulling over single brushstrokes for several hours, Cézanne reduced naturally-occurring forms to their geometric essentials whilst simultaneously exploring new perspectival dimensions which rejected standard, single-point perspective in favour of a sort of binocular vision by which slightly

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<sup>118</sup> Anne Higonnet, “What do you want to know about children?” in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 202.

<sup>119</sup> Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Wassily Kandinsky in Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Cohen, “Nietzsche and the Future of Art”, *Hyperion*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2007), 11.

<sup>121</sup> Paul Cézanne quoted in Turner, “Art Toys”.

different though concurrent visual perceptions of the same image would present the depth and variation of what one truly sees.

The phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty understood Cézanne's renunciation of traditional artistic elements such as pictorial arrangements and single-point perspective as a bid to achieve a "lived perspective" by effectuating all the complexities observed by the eye in a single moment.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, this perspective was forever changing for Cézanne, for not only when painting was he capturing a moment in time that once passed could never return, but it was subject to the vicissitudes of his own personal perception: "Art is a personal apperception, which I embody in sensations and which I ask intelligence to organise into a painting."<sup>123</sup> By "conveying a structured idea in paint of the sensory explosion of first sight", Cézanne was hoping to recreate something akin to the Damascus moment, producing a visual snapshot which captures the momentousness of one's exposure to the complexity of true vision and perception.<sup>124</sup> This visual epiphany can be understood alongside the extreme freshness of vision of which modernists believed the child to be in possession. To turn away, as modern artists increasingly did, from traditional compositions, structures, subjects, colours, and perspectives in art, was to submit oneself to the visual and artistic clarity of the child untouched.

Cézanne, however, was an artist who resided on the very cusp of the modernist movement. In this way characterised by the *fin-de-siècle* pessimism

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<sup>122</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt", trans. M. Smith, in Johnson, G. (ed.) *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 64.

<sup>123</sup> Paul Cézanne quoted in John Hendrix, *Platonic Architectonics: Platonic Philosophies & the Visual Arts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 175.

<sup>124</sup> Turner, "Art Toys". The 'Damascus moment' or the 'road to Damascus' is a term used to describe a sudden turning point in a person's life, and has its origins in the Bible when apostle Paul, having previously been a Pharisee known as Saul who persecuted Jesus' followers, converted to Christianity while literally on the road to Damascus from Jerusalem.

which permeated the avant-garde consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century, Cézanne's glimpse at modernism was not only one he took with trepidation, but one filled with the deeply anxious despondency he felt for the future and for which he was so admired by his contemporaries.<sup>125</sup> Whilst Cézanne spoke of his daily struggles with anxiety – “my ennui has followed me [and] life is terrifying” – and how he found himself permanently in “such a state of mental agitation”, such apprehension for the future of man was just as apparent in his artwork.<sup>126</sup> Both *Jas de Bouffan* (1885-1887) (fig. 1.2) and *Still Life with Cherub* (c.1895) (fig. 1.3), for example, feature traditional or classical forms which have been rendered ill at ease.

In *Jas de Bouffan*, Cézanne depicts a grand and historic bastide of the Aix-en-Provence region; the work is seemingly monumental, glorifying the golden majesty of this eighteenth-century manor house as though it is a vast Roman construction that has stood for centuries. Yet he cannot help but disturb the image, “tilting the buildings and roughing the brushstrokes” as if to suggest the unsteadiness of the future and the destabilising effects of modernity on that which has remained steadfast for so long.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, in his *Still Life with Cherub*, Cézanne reworks the traditional genre of still-life. The picture space is crowded and the perspective confusing to such an extent that the cherub statuette and the surrounding fruit look liable to slide or tumble from the warped table at any time, crashing, rather symbolically, to the ground in a crumpled, broken heap.

In light of this artistic reflection of what it felt and looked like to be alive at this time, to be conscious of oneself plummeting into the disconcerting

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<sup>125</sup> Picasso once said of Cézanne: “We love him for his anxiety” (Graham-Dixon, *Art in France*.)

<sup>126</sup> Paul Cézanne quoted in Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne's Doubt”, 59-60.

<sup>127</sup> Graham-Dixon, *Art in France*.

pandemonium of modern life at such a helter-skelter pace, the modernist “interest in the condition of ‘childness’ [has been understood to] represent an overall desire to retreat into a more innocent state untainted by the bad habits and values of the civilised mind.”<sup>128</sup> The avant-garde practice to embrace the image, influence, and concept of the child emerged at a time when the “adoption of otherness into the vocabulary of European thought” was steadily increasing alongside Freud’s popularisation of “the notion that the child is father to the man.”<sup>129</sup> It was this context that also gave rise to Primitivism, a form of artistic expression which sought to contest the pessimism and corruption of modernity by engaging with the ‘other’ so as to effect a kind of creative and conceptual rebirth by which the example of the child serves as the seed from which we grow.

Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), a pioneer of Primitivism, was an artist who, through an engagement with the ‘primitive’, sought to express that refreshing *naïveté* of which Baudelaire had spoken. Rousseau was, and still is, known more familiarly by his nickname, *le douanier* (the customs officer), a humorous reference to his job as a toll and tax collector before painting emerged as a serious hobby and eventual occupation in his forties. As with many modernist artists, Rousseau was heavily ridiculed by the public and the art establishment during the majority of his working life, but was posthumously recognised by many as something of a self-taught genius whose works were not only innovative and of a high artistic quality, but also exerted a great influence on successive generations of avant-garde artists.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> John Carlin, “From Wonder to Blunder: The Child is Mother to the Man” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 242.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Cornelia Stabenow, *Henri Rousseau 1844-1910* (Cologne: Taschen, 2001), 7-8.

As Kandinsky noted in 1912, Rousseau's impact was uniquely significant: "largely regarded as an isolated phenomenon outside the mainstream of modernism, [...] Henri Rousseau opened the way for simplicity and for the new possibilities it offers. This aspect of his many-sided talent now has for us the most significant value."<sup>131</sup> Aside from some casual consultation with academic painters such as Félix Auguste Clément and Jean-Léon Gérôme, Rousseau was, like a small child, "totally unschooled, [and thus] unhampered by an academic system."<sup>132</sup> Although not frequently, Rousseau produced works in which children featured as the subject, as well as drawing from them on a conceptual level. Prominent amongst these are *Child with a Puppet* (c.1903) (fig. 1.4) and *Child with a Doll* (1892) (fig. 1.5), both taking the form of a sort of portrait, whose inconsistent colour modulation and unnatural perspective are typical of Rousseau's *naïve* style and composition. Of particular note is the way in which both children appear to fade into the ground of the landscape; it is as though, like the opportunity for rebirth and regrowth that their youth had come to represent, these children are sprouting like plants out of nature and blooming like the flowers around them.

Whilst Rousseau's *oeuvre* comprised a variety of subject matters, he became most well-known for his 'jungle' paintings, inspired by an unusual combination of children's books, Indian miniatures, visits to Paris' botanical gardens and zoos, and various tableaux of taxidermy, all coloured by his own whimsical imagination.

Works such as *The Repast of the Lion* (1907) (fig. 1.6) and *Struggle between Tiger and Bull* (c.1909) (fig. 1.7) were typical of his jungle paintings, whose experimental

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<sup>131</sup> Wassily Kandinsky quoted in "Henri Rousseau", *MoMA*, No. 34 (1985), 2.

<sup>132</sup> Henry S. Francis, "'The Jungle' by Henri-Julien Rousseau", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 36, No. 9 (1949), 171.

use of colour combined with a distortion of natural scale, and a rather flat and cartoon-like style contributed to the notion that he was unskilled, painting like a child might draw their perception of a landscape. Rousseau's painterly process involved repeatedly laying cut-out planes over one another, and painting each section of colour at a time; like some sort of collage or paint-by-numbers, Rousseau's technique proved further ammunition to his critics' claims of childish incompetence.

It was perhaps Rousseau's reliance upon imagination and fantasy that rendered him most childlike: "with no more extraordinary inspiration than the Paris zoo for his wild beast, and the prosaic leaves and grasses which he gathered by the wayside as he walked around Paris, he fabricated and fashioned the great jungle pictures, a series of fanciful compositions which became the vehicle of his imaginative creation."<sup>133</sup> Rousseau made no secret of the extent to which he felt his artwork was subject to the magical combination of nature and imagination that so many considered synonymous with the childhood state. Yet the depth of his investment in the otherworldly, as much as the 'other', evidenced in his childlike conflation of reality and illusion, is testament to "how intensely he recorded the world of childhood", for as his good friend Guillaume Apollinaire observed, Rousseau had "so strong a sense of reality that when he painted a fantastic subject, he sometimes took fright and, trembling all over, had to open the window."<sup>134 135</sup>

Other commentators proved less convinced by the authenticity of Rousseau's connection with childhood, *naïveté*, and the 'primitive'. Rousseau's capacity for

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<sup>133</sup> Francis, "'The Jungle'", 172.

<sup>134</sup> "The Henri Rousseau Exhibition", *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago (1907-1951)*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1942), 19.

<sup>135</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire quoted in Paul Barolsky, "The Playful Artifice of Douanier Rousseau's Persona", *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1993), 21.

shrewdness beyond that suggested by his childish façade is to be found in the very same features that served as evidence of the opposite. Not only was he partial to parody (his 1910 painting *The Dream* is considered a satirical allegory of, or even “an obvious homage” to, Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* of 1863), but his embodiment of the *naïveté* which characterised his paintings was arguably as astute an act as his style.<sup>136</sup> As Paul Barolsky mused: “we imagine a charming, naïve, childlike, indeed gullible man, [but] if one is naïve, surely one does not know it, and Rousseau, contrary to his persona, was anything but naïve; [in fact] the primitive Rousseau is a forgery.”<sup>137</sup>

Primitivism emerged from a cultural obsession with ‘otherness’ that had pervaded nineteenth-century intelligentsia. Given impetus by artists such as Paul Gauguin and Rousseau, Primitivism had in the years of the early-twentieth century become an established means by which the avant-garde could negotiate complex views regarding the supposed ‘artificiality’ of modern European society and a means of challenging what they considered the lifeless art of the academies and the bourgeois tastes to which it pandered. The phenomenon of Primitivism was far from simple; it took different forms at different times and locations, and was underpinned by a complex amalgam of concepts. Built upon a close relationship with nature, one’s emotions, innate spontaneity and instinctive human condition, that is to say, all of the perceived qualities of non-Western and thus ‘primitive’ cultures that went against the confines of modern civilisation, Primitivism worked to counter the regimented and restrained character of modernity and the artistic production which

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<sup>136</sup> Mark Griffiths, *The Lotus Quest: In Search of the Sacred Flower* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), 85.

<sup>137</sup> Barolsky, “Playful Artifice”, 21.

supported it. Primitivism thus often manifested itself as a wilful imitation by creative figures in the West of ‘primitive’ ideas and images as a staunch and deliberate subversion of classic, academic styles.

Most prominently in the visual arts, Primitivist techniques and styles included exaggerated and unnaturalistic forms, unmodulated colour, crude contours, heavily stylised features, rough textures, flattened forms, and perspectival distortion, all functioning as a rebuttal to the naturalistic forms, subtly blended tones, softly fluid contours, mimetic features, smooth surfaces, and carefully structured illusions of depth found in academic art.

To further situate their work, artists also frequently included specific cultural signifiers such as ‘ethnographic’ items. Awareness and interest in such items, namely sculptures, from various African cultures and tribes reached a head around the turn of the twentieth century following the beginning of what became known as the ‘Scramble for Africa’ in approximately 1881. This process, comprising the competitive occupation, division, and colonisation of African territory and peoples by European powers during the period of New Imperialism, which had replaced the fascination with the ‘Orient’ that was so widespread in earlier decades, saw the importation of wooden masks, statuettes, and carved sculptures from Africa.

In Europe, this *art nègre*, as it was known, was not exhibited as ‘art’ in galleries but rather as objects of material culture in world fairs and ethnographic museums, where they were used as a means of legitimising colonial intervention. Comparing the perceived crudeness of African sculpture to the sophistication of European art, the West established African people and their cultures as the archetypal ‘Other’, using the perceived ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarism’ of their art as



evidence of their 'primitive' state, and by extension as a means of legitimising colonial enterprise as a moral responsibility on the part of Europeans to 'save' and 'civilise' Africa, thereby conveniently hiding the real economic motives and disastrous effect the entire process had upon indigenous peoples and their cultures. Europeans failed to realise, or wilfully chose to ignore, that instead of African art demonstrating its makers' 'primitivism' by their incompetent inability to represent accurately, African representational modes were conceptual and symbolic as opposed to mimetic; the African approach to artistic representation was simply different to that of Europeans, but as a result of the 'Other' mentality, Europeans would only entertain that something different to their own 'civilisation' had to be 'primitive'.

In the early-twentieth century, avant-garde artists and writers chiefly working in France, where Primitivism first emerged and developed, though also in other European countries such as Britain and Germany, explored the features and uses of African art and its connected themes as a particularly effective means of opposing traditional conventions of creative production. This manifested itself variously, for whilst figures such as German artist Emil Nolde and British author Joseph Conrad produced works which offered a very personal criticism of the destructive and acutely hypocritical actions of the European coloniser, others like Picasso referenced Africa and its art rather differently.<sup>138</sup> Picasso harnessed African art for its inspiring qualities, for its unusual conceptual qualities, popular associations with magic and superstitious exoticism, and its capacity to provide a

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<sup>138</sup> Emil Nolde's 1912 painting *The Missionary* depicts the Christian missionary as satanic, controversially demonising him and calling into question the benefits of his 'civilising' influence. Joseph Conrad's famous 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness* draws a comparison between the perceived 'darkness' (i.e. 'primitivism') of African communities and the real 'darkness' (i.e. racism and cruelty) deep in the heart of the Western coloniser, critiquing imperialist ideologies.

pathway back to our simple, ‘primitive’ roots, as an example of the creative freedom sought by those who felt oppressed by the constraints of modern ‘civilisation’.

These non-conventional sources of creative inspiration facilitated what seemed to be a sort of ‘spontaneity’ and ‘authenticity’ that did away with the supposed ‘corruption’ and ‘decadence’ which contributed to Western culture’s characterisation amongst the avant-garde as something of a spent force.<sup>139</sup>

In this way, the manner in which concepts and images of the ‘primitive’ were harnessed by avant-garde figures and the modernist movement mirrors the process by which children and the state of childhood were creatively commodified, providing just one of the key links between the two. Both in terms of the specifics of their perceived features and the connected general symbolism of the unmediated, unspoiled and thus ‘authentic’, and the way in which these characteristics were exposed, enhanced, and mobilised, both the child and the ‘primitive’ ultimately served as a fascinating ‘Other’ by which they were not only appropriated and exploited, but also conflated by virtue of their mutual ‘otherness’. This conflation was constantly fuelled by the deluge of works inspired by and based upon what became the perceived shared qualities of the child and the ‘primitive’, whose specifics varied depending upon the particular interests and aims of each creator. In 1936, Erwin Panofsky provided a summary of man’s perceptions of the ‘primitive’ offering a significant insight into the multifaceted nature of the term and thus the various ways in which it has become connected and conflated with the child and childhood. Panofsky writes:

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<sup>139</sup> Fisun Güner, “How a small African figurine changed art”, *BBC Culture*, August 21, 2007, [www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170818-how-a-small-african-figurine-changed-art](http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170818-how-a-small-african-figurine-changed-art).

“There had been, from the beginning of classical speculation, two contrasting opinions about the natural state of man [...] One view, termed ‘soft’ primitivism in an illuminating book by Lovejoy & Boas, conceives of primitive life as a golden age of plenty, innocence, and happiness – in other words, as civilized life purged of its vices. The other, ‘hard’ form of primitivism conceives of primitive life as an almost subhuman existence full of terrible hardships and devoid of all comforts -- in other words, as civilized life stripped of its virtues.”<sup>140</sup>

For some, it was as simple as drawing upon the mutual parsimony of style, not only the “lack of civilised accoutrements”, but more significantly, a propensity for nakedness on the part of both the child and the ‘primitive’, often understood by the avant-garde to represent “a return to the uninhibited innocence of paradise, whose inhabitants are enviably free of the taboos shackling us” in urban contemporaneity.<sup>141</sup> For others, the similarity was strongest in their respective artistic practice; that is to say, the propensity amongst children to produce artwork whose “barbaric, one-eyed grotesques” and “exaggerations and distortions of body parts [...] that express a spiritual life of which the child often is not conscious” resemble the style, appearance, and potential symbolism of the art of ‘primitive’ peoples.<sup>142 143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Erwin Panofsky, “Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition”, quoted in Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 257-262.

<sup>141</sup> Arnheim, “Beginning with the Child”, 23.

<sup>142</sup> Helfenstein, “Issue of Childhood”, 141.

<sup>143</sup> Wörwag, “There is Unconscious”, 81.

Fry stands out in the modernist conflation of the child and the ‘primitive’, chiefly in the powerful connection he found between “the freshness of vision, the surprise and shock, the intimacy and sharpness of notation, the *imprévu* quality of primitive art” and the comparably “enormous superiority” of the untaught child artist.<sup>144</sup> Simultaneously regretful of the loss as an adult in self-conscious modernity of such direct vision and capacity to create and mesmerised by that which still remained strong in the child, Fry was convinced by a sort of deeply spiritual magic at play in both the child and ‘primitive’, by the notion of an “animistic world, when every object in the home had a personality, was either friendly or menacing, was on our side or against us” and in which “the animistic and fetishistic delight in objects, so characteristic of primitive and child artists, renders them susceptible to the apparent magic of skilful naturalistic illusion” not so accessible to ‘normal’ adults.<sup>145</sup> <sup>146</sup> Essentially, “primitives [...] are the ‘children’ of social evolution” and vice versa, as for Fry, imbued by the European tendency towards ‘otherisation’, “one habitually invoked the other [for] the characteristics of both must be regarded as projections stimulated by the modern European’s sense of his own place in culture, history and evolutionary development.”<sup>147</sup>

It is possible that such ideas and comparisons developed from prevailing physiognomic theories which began to gain credence in the previous century. Whilst child psychologist Millicent Shinn remarked in 1900 that “babies sit like monkeys, with the soles of their feet facing each other”, palaeontologist S.S. Buckman pushed

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<sup>144</sup> Fry, “Children’s Drawings”, 226.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Shiff, “Primitivist Phylogeny”, 176-177.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 160, 177.

this notion further in the early 1900s.<sup>148</sup> By studying the growth of his children using the same processes he applied when working with ammonites and brachiopods, and influenced by Hyatt's law of acceleration, Buckman posited that there was a recapitulatory link between the characters of adult monkeys and human children, and sought to identify behavioural and physical evidence of this simian past by looking to potential shared characteristics, including "greater prognathy, flattened nose, puffy cheeks like the pouches of *Cercopithecus*, relatively long arms, a tendency to sleep on the stomach with limbs curled under, [as well as] the soothing effect of rocking as an inducement to sleep by remembrance of a former life suspended in tree branches, and the child's urge to climb staircases as another vestige of an arboreal past."<sup>149</sup> Not only do these assertions offer some uncomfortable suggestion of perceived physiognomic links between the appearance of the ape, the child, and the 'primitive' in a fashion reminiscent of pro-Caucasian race theory, but also points to a longstanding relationship between ontogeny and phylogeny in the double-helix field of study of the child and the 'primitive'.

In philosophical terms, the establishment of the child as the anthropological 'primitive' originates in the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), as discussed in Chapter Two. The longevity of the concept, from the eighteenth century until the early twentieth, is testament to the power the idea exerted upon the European consciousness. Richard Schiff's succinct summary of the concept states that "primitives appear to be phylogenetic 'children' amongst the world's races, so

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<sup>148</sup> Millicent Washburn Shinn, *The Biography of a Baby* (Boston: Houghton, 1900), 7.

<sup>149</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 137. Hyatt's law of acceleration refers to the hypothesis that genetic modifications and inherited characteristics tend to develop in successive generations at earlier and earlier stages of growth i.e. those which first appear in adult life will eventually develop in the childhoods or even embryonic stages of descendants.

the European child is ontogenetic ‘primitive’, an undeveloped being within its own race [and in turn] the racially advanced child recapitulates all previous stages of phylogenetic evolution, including that represented by the present-day primitive, man still living in the wild.”<sup>150</sup> To unpack this a little, the relationship between the child and the ‘primitive’ is galvanised further by the introduction of another twofold dynamic whereby the ‘primitive’, thanks to its perceived elementariness and underdevelopment, is seen to represent the child on a global scale as though it were a race of peoples, and in turn, the child serves to represent the ‘primitive’ stage of its own single-race development, with the progress from child to adult understood as akin to the advancement of the earliest and most ‘primitive’ human to its modern, ‘civilised’ version.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to recognise that such a relationship had a profound effect on treatment and behaviours as much as classification and terminology. The systematic demeaning of children by adults in the broadly modern era, manifesting itself as a denial or removal of personhood or culture in favour of the instilment of one’s own ideals, often justified by the construction of collective moral responsibility, can be understood as reflective of the cultural and personal annihilation of ‘primitives’ and their societies by the steamrolling of Western colonial endeavours: “regarding children of industrialised society; they suffered the fate of native peoples living in societies evolving towards the organised state.”<sup>151</sup> Accordingly, modernist efforts to return to an idealised ‘before’ through the child and the ‘primitive’, or some conflation thereof, often became a practice in exactly that which it sought to critique or subvert. An interest in and addressing of the

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<sup>150</sup> Shiff, “Primitivist Phylogeny”, 162.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 180.

‘Other’ almost inevitably resulted in an exploitation of its perceived symbols and values for the purposes of an avant-garde statement or ideal that ultimately encompassed counter-productive processes of fetishisation arguably as shallow and inauthentic as that which they sought to expose and dismantle.

Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), ostracised from French middle-class society following the loss of his stockbroking job and thus disillusioned by ‘civilised’ modernity, fell victim to such a practice. Initially, Gauguin escaped to Brittany, where he misappropriated its deeply spiritual culture for his own purposes. When this proved exhausted, Gauguin sought out fresh inspiration on the French Polynesian island of Tahiti, only to be left disappointed further upon finding it almost stripped bare of its indigenous culture as a result of colonial processes. Gauguin proceeded to desperately invent in painted form the paradisiacal escape he craved, ultimately producing works whose flat, inauthenticity simply became “a long, drawn-out confession of the fraudulence of it all.”<sup>152</sup> Yet as modernity continued to thunder, such appropriation of the ‘Other’, or invention of its perceived yet absent qualities, persisted as a seemingly most effective method of some sort of modernist renaissance of self, an opportunity for rebirth, for “the sight of a child or a primitive will arouse certain longings in adult, civilised persons – longings which relate to the unfulfilled desires and needs of those parts of the personality which have been blotted out of the total picture in favour of the adopted persona.”<sup>153</sup>

A prominent example of such commodification of the ‘Other’ is that of the child models Fränzi and Marzella, who became regular features in the studio and artwork of German Expressionist artists Erich Heckel (1883-1970) and Ernst

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<sup>152</sup> Graham-Dixon, *Art in France*.

<sup>153</sup> C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Waukegan: Fontana Press, 1995), 273.

Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), two founding members of the avant-garde group Die Brücke. These young girls, precariously on the cusp of puberty, came to represent the “ambivalent naivety and seductiveness of the adolescent girl” when imbued with Primitivist iconography.<sup>154</sup> Sometimes clothed, though most often nude, the girls were frequently seated on or beside furniture carved or painted in line with tribal models, the rough and angular brushstrokes that comprised the girls’ painted forms mimicking that of the ‘primitive’ designs surrounding them.

Kirchner’s 1910 painting *Marzella* (fig. 1.8) juxtaposes the nude, underdeveloped child’s body with arms awkwardly crossed to hide her genitalia alongside a heavily made-up face, whose angularity and starkness of features is suggestive of both a tribal mask and the painted face of a geisha, thereby providing an unsettling melange of both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ primitivism of Africa and the Orient. Thought to be based upon a pen and ink sketch by Kirchner in a letter he sent to Heckel in 1910 in which he drew Marzella seated with a shamisen (suggestion of which can be seen in the bottom left corner of the painted version), the iconographic association of this instrument with geishas, as well as the cropped picture space and unconventional angles akin to those of Japanese woodblock prints, points to the suggestion that “Kirchner consciously associated Marzella with a geisha, commonly thought in the West to be available for sexual hire.”<sup>155</sup> This indicates both the erotic exoticism associated with the geisha and thus thrust upon the child, as well yet another example of European misinterpretation of cultural practices of the ‘Other’, given the erroneous equation of the geisha with the sex worker.

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<sup>154</sup> Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 38.

<sup>155</sup> Sherwin Simmons, “‘A suggestiveness that can make one crazy’: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Images of Marzella”, *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2015), 529.



Heckel's painting of the same year, *Girl with a Doll* (fig. 1.9), depicts a similarly disconcerting combination of innocence and seductiveness, with Fränzi presented reclining on a sofa, her nudity invitingly displayed and her face somehow coy, whilst also holding a doll, an archetypal symbol of childhood and play. The open nudity of the child model juxtaposed against the fully-clothed doll offers an uncomfortable indication of the child's threshold position and persona; what is more, the German word 'Puppe' means both 'doll' and 'chrysalis', offering a symbolic crossover between the states of innocent childhood and sexual adolescence.<sup>156</sup> The child's body itself is too suggestive of the burgeoning transformation; whilst her chest remains completely flat, there is indication of the formation of a narrower waistline with the widening of the hips, the crudely thick outline of her left buttock bulging so as to perhaps suggest "a more pronounced steatopygia, a physical condition that had come to be seen as a specific sign of the primitive, unrestrained sexuality of African women."<sup>157</sup>

In speaking of Marzella, Kirchner once described how "we lie on the carpet and play [...] There is a great charm in such a pure female, a suggestiveness that can make one crazy. More so than in the older girls. Freer, but without anything of the consummate female being lost. Possibly there is something more complete about her than with those who are more mature but in whom [...] quality withers away."<sup>158</sup> Such comments about these apparently seductive young girls, erotic by virtue of their fetishized primitivism and naïve awkwardness, supported the phenomenon by

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<sup>156</sup> Simmons, "Suggestiveness", 525.

<sup>157</sup> Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 65.

<sup>158</sup> Roman Norbert Ketterer, ed., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Postkarten und Briefe an Erich Heckel in Altonaer Museum in Hamburg* (Cologne: Dumont, 1984), 238.

which “womanhood only arrives at points of passage defined by relations to the Subject from which she is excluded.”<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, this offers a backdrop by which we might understand the peculiarity of the relationship between artists such as Kirchner and Heckel, and their child models. Subject to the bohemian setting of an artist’s studio awash with unaccounted strangers and a ‘free love’ approach, what emerged amongst artists was “a manipulative attitude towards the girls that depersonalises them, reducing them to objects that serve [their] erotic and artistic imagination.”<sup>160</sup> Given it was not until 1995 that the identities of Fränzi and Marzella were actually proven, the modernist pursuit of truth and originality in art and literature through the perceived qualities and symbols of the oft conflated images, concepts, and figures of the child and the ‘primitive’ was arguably just as corrupt and self-serving as the establishment it sought to challenge, reducing personhood, individuality, and culture to mere tropes of the ‘Other’ in service of a variety of personal or collective aims.<sup>161</sup>

The emergence of the twofold concept of “the childhood of man [and] children as home-grown savages” invites a confusing conflation that exacerbates the denigration of selfhood effected by adult concepts of children and childhood, modernist or otherwise, and the connected harnessing of the ‘primitive’.<sup>162</sup> Victor Turner discusses the notion of the ‘neophyte’ as a particularly effective concept by which to understand the conflated and ‘in-between’ experience of the child and ‘primitive’. In reference to his analysis of the child as a ‘betwixt-and-between’

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<sup>159</sup> Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 57.

<sup>160</sup> Simmons, “‘Suggestiveness’”, 537.

<sup>161</sup> Klaus Grimberg, “The Secret of Fränzi and Marcella”, *The Atlantic Times: A Monthly Newspaper from Germany*, October (2010).

<sup>162</sup> Turner, “Art Toys”.

being, as explored earlier in the chapter, Turner's symbol of the neophyte represents the acute maladjustment imposed upon and felt by the child as he or she becomes synonymous with any number of tropes or constructions irrespective of his or her own individuality: "likened to or treated as embryos [...] neophytes are neither living or dead from one aspect, and both living and dead from another their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories [...] they are neither one thing or another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere."<sup>163</sup>

With this returns the image and symbol of the shadow as representative of the child, and indeed that conflated with 'primitive' concepts, manifesting itself as the ephemeral, greyish sheath of a person unacknowledged by society's strict guidelines around and beyond whose fixed perimeters they undulate. Society's unflinching bias towards the fixed and codified over the transient and hazy is representative of the way in which children and childhood have been approached and treated, and thus misunderstood, in both scholarly and social circles. In turn, this has given rise to circumstances by which the child "may be regarded as a kind of human *prima materia* [with] physical but not social 'reality', thence they have to be hidden, since it is a paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there!"<sup>164</sup>

There is also the tendency amongst adults to view this shadowy substance of childhood as something whose residence amongst the merging fringes of black and white, of the 'shadowlands', makes for a sort of murky and mucky obscurity, offering the image of a grubby polyp-like ambiguity akin to the unknown

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<sup>163</sup> Turner, "Betwixt and Between", 48.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 49.

“androgynous nature of [the] primordial times” of childhood.<sup>165</sup> Drawing upon the book of Leviticus 11:9-12, in which the Jewish people are proscribed from eating crustaceans as creatures of ambiguous classification, Mary Douglas argues that there is something to be said for the idea that “transitional beings are particularly polluting [for] what is unclear and contradictory [...] tends to be regarded as unclear. The unclear is unclear.”<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, this becomes a sort of self-fulfilling process, whereby “the passivity of neophytes to their instructors, their malleability, which is increased by submission to ordeal, their reduction to a uniform condition, are signs of the process [by which] they are ground down to be fashioned anew” and by which we can characterise the ongoing treatment of the child, and perhaps on a more recognisable level, of the ‘primitive’.<sup>167</sup>

Whilst the shadowiness of the child and the state of childhood invited attempts to regulate, codify, and rebuild them afresh, as when crusading to ‘civilise’ the ‘primitive’, their opacity also attracted efforts to explore and understand their true characteristics and condition. Like the voyages of discovery whose participants endeavoured to unearth the much coveted secrets of the ‘primitive’ and his vast ‘dark continent’, the ‘shadowland’ world of childhood proved just as fascinating a landscape to uncover. In the same way that the process of discovery and understanding of so-called ‘primitive’ peoples and cultures was one which started at a very different place to where it currently is, beginning with economically-motivated and racially-fuelled colonial exploits from the fourteenth century onwards and developing into the concerted and ongoing efforts to properly understand and

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<sup>165</sup> Comini, “Freud’s attic”, 178.

<sup>166</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* quoted in Turner, “Betwixt and Between”, 48.

<sup>167</sup> Turner, “Betwixt and Between”, 50-51.

promote cultural difference we see today, awareness, recognition, and understanding of children and childhood has undergone a similar journey, “as if childhood were itself a dark continent that was completely ‘other’” to begin with.<sup>168</sup>

From its origins in the very innermost depths of “this fruitful darkness” which comprises the ‘shadowland’ existence of childhood, emerged a great variety of images, concepts, and constructs of adult and societal fabrication which came to light in earnest from the Enlightenment era onwards, before the gradual emergence of distinctly more ‘aware’ approaches to children and childhood, both scholarly and practical, from the twentieth century onwards.<sup>169</sup>

Modernist writer Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961) offered an interesting interpretation of the relationship between the child, the ‘primitive’, and the shadow in his poem *La Féticheuse*. Part of his 1928 anthology *Petits contes nègres pour les enfants des blancs* (*Little Negro Stories for White Children*), the poem’s title literally translates to mean ‘the charmer’, which recalls both conceptually and visually the sort of mystic landscape and spiritualism of Rousseau’s ‘dark continent’ as depicted in his 1907 painting *The Snake Charmer* (fig. 1.10). Cendrars is widely considered the first writer to formulate a solid poetical synthesis of modernism and to produce poetry which successfully expressed the fundamentals of the movement, often compared to Rimbaud for his sense of vision and insatiable curiosity. Equally enamoured by both history and the endlessly modernising world, travel also proved a great passion for Cendrars, as well as an enormous influence upon his literature, not least *La Féticheuse*, for which “il a puisé de ses nombreux voyages à travers le monde, tout un faisceau de contes et de récits africains qu’il a adaptés à la manière

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<sup>168</sup> Turner, “Art Toys”.

<sup>169</sup> Turner, “Betwixt and Between”, 55.

des griots.”<sup>170</sup> Cendrars’ shadow, a mysterious figure of African spiritualism, whose story is one of disappearances and reappearances, of intrigue and mystery, in this way bears a catalogue of similarities to the child.

Despite the literal translation of *La Féticheuse* as ‘the charmer’, Cendrars text is most commonly known to Anglophone readers as *The Shadow*. As such, it has been most notably translated, illustrated and transformed into a children’s picture book, by Marcia Brown in 1982. Full of life and vigour in the daytime as it frolics with the jungle’s animals, heavy and fleeting by nightfall, bumbling about amongst the flickers of light emitted from the villagers’ fire, the Shadow is a confusing and ephemeral presence, both in amongst yet separate from everyone else, and in all its sneaking and playing and prowling and dancing, it is in fact a full-bodied character, far more of a person than its seemingly transitory existence might first suggest. Judith Wynn Halsted offered a summary of this symbolism when she asserted that the Shadow “evokes an image that goes far beyond that cast by an object between the earth and the sun, [...] it incorporates the idea of spirit, both haunting and enchanting, and the mystery of the African jungle, [...] conveying an eerie – but not at all frightening – sense of awe in the unknown that Shadow represents.”<sup>171</sup>

Perhaps reflected in its target audience of children, both Cendrars’ Shadow and Brown’s adaptation present a character whose symbolism speaks as much of the sense of the unknown and general ‘otherness’ associated with the child as that of the

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<sup>170</sup> “La Féticheuse, par B. Cendrars & M. Brown”, *Le Genévrier*, accessed August 21, 2017, [http://www.genevrier.fr/catalogue\\_zoom.asp?NLI\\_NUM=54](http://www.genevrier.fr/catalogue_zoom.asp?NLI_NUM=54) Translation: “from his numerous travels around the world, he accumulated a whole body of African stories and fables which he then adapted in the style of a griot”.

<sup>171</sup> Judith Wynn Halsted, *Some of My Best Friends are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers from Preschool to High School* (Scottsdale: Great Potential Press Inc., 2009), 280.

‘primitive’, possibly first suggested by the African influences found in the text and illustrations. Valérie Meylan’s succinct interpretation of the Shadow as “une description mais aussi une énigme” could just as easily be applied to the child, for as much as it is a descriptive term and sort of title or category, indicative of a whole host of biological and social classifications as well as personal perceptions, it is equally a most enigmatic ‘Other’, a mystery whose exploration and attempted solving has occupied many, scholarly and otherwise, from the advent of the Age of Enlightenment to present day.<sup>172</sup> In a prelude to her translation, Brown offered the following introduction:

“What is Shadow? From conversations with shamans in their villages, from storytellers around the fires in an Africa that is passing into memory, the poet Blaise Cendrars evoked a dancing image – Shadow. Out of the fire that called forth the many images of Shadow, came the ash that was a sacred bond to the life that had gone before. The beliefs and ghosts of the past haunt the present as it stretches into the future. The eerie, shifting image of Shadow appears where there is light and fire and storyteller to bring it to life.”<sup>173</sup>

The storytelling is as cryptic as the idea itself, such is the mystery which surrounds the concept and understanding of the child, enshrouding it like another layer of shadow on top of that of its forever shifting personhood. Brown’s brief

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<sup>172</sup> Valérie Meylan, “La Féticheuse”, *Ricochet*, accessed August 17, 2017, <http://www.ricochet-jeunes.org/livres/livre/52966-la-fetichouse>. Translation: “a description but also a puzzle”.

<sup>173</sup> Blaise Cendrars, *La Féticheuse (The Shadow)*, trans. Marcia Brown (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1995), 6.

preface, although ambiguous, is revelatory in terms of the connection between Cendrars' Shadow and the child, drawing upon issues of memory, of the passage of time, of the relationship between histories and the future, both personal and collective, and of the capacity to be both hidden and exposed, often depending upon the interest and perception of others. This enigmatic Shadow is in every way the child: like those considered to be 'seen and not heard', it seems "it has no voice", and so becomes "mute [for] it never speaks [and only] listens"; similarly it is reduced to "follow[ing] man everywhere" during which "it is always watching", fascinated by the world by which it feels simultaneously ostracised and absorbed; thus debased it finds an affiliation with "all that crawls [and] all that squirms", and in so doing, "breaking loose, unwinding, stretching, stirring [and] branching out", endlessly strives for emancipation.<sup>174</sup>

Brown's illustrations support this message both in form and content. In the same way that the shadow, like a child, "devient un personnage qui joue", Brown's illustrations are born of artistic processes inspired by the creatively experimental child, bringing them to life "à l'aide de papier découpés et de gravures sur bois."<sup>175</sup> Whilst Brown's illustrations frequently offer a sort of nod to the 'primitive' culture and landscape of Africa (fig. 1.11) from which Cendrars originally took inspiration, others adopt a far more symbolic approach to the concept of the shadow as implied by Cendrars and explored in this thesis. Her illustrations sporadically include those in which wispy, semi-translucent, yet beautifully detailed figures and shapes are shown in tandem with her solid black tribespeople.

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<sup>174</sup> Cendrars, *La Féticheuse (The Shadow)*, 18, 14, 31, 16, 21.

<sup>175</sup> Meylan, "La Féticheuse". Translation: "becomes a character who plays" and "with the help of paper cut-outs and wood etchings."



Seen either alongside their solid counterparts, mimicking their movements (fig. 1.12), or as a sort of ghostly, dream-like apparition floating above a stationary body (fig. 1.13), these filmy shadows represent the complexity and depth of character to be found within that which is ostensibly simple in appearance. Not only does this speak of the adult tendency to underestimate the child, but also of the connected issue of the significance that the shadow had acquired by the late-nineteenth century as a symbol and metaphor of the overlooked inner truth and selfhood of a person which was in full bloom in childhood but becoming extinguished by one's adult years. Woven to capacity with memories, thoughts, and personhood, like the pattern of a most intricate lace, Brown's pale, delicate shadows are demonstrative of the histories, experiences, and personalities which make up a person inside and which can be preserved should we desist the temptation to meddle and quash.

It is pertinent to note here that Blaise Cendrars was the author's pen name, carefully chosen as a further expression of his thoughts and creative message. Born Frédéric-Louis Sauser, the writer first signed his name as Blaise Cendrars in 1912 when writing *Pâques à New York* (*Easter in New York*), his first major contribution to modernist literature. 'Blaise', a sort of 'Frenchification' of the English word 'blaze', and Cendrars as a compound of 'cendres', the French for 'cinders', and 'ars', the Latin for 'art', this modernist figure's name became a sort of metaphorical echoing of not only the phoenix, capable of rising from its own ashes, but also the concept of one's rebirth through the proxy of the child, providing for an opportunity to revisit and re-fashion oneself and one's ideas, though often to the detriment of this child-vehicle and with counter-productive results.

When Cendrars applied this metaphor to the act of creation in writing, asserting in his aptly entitled autobiography *L'homme foudroyé* (*The Man Struck Down*) that “car écrire c’est brûler vif, mais c’est aussi renaître de ses cendres”, referring to the painful and destructive aspects of creative methods alongside their potential to eventually offer salvation and a sense of unearthly eternity, he could as well be speaking of the process by which children are harnessed by intellectual and creative endeavours for an array of personal, professional, or collective aims, as explored and analysed in detail by the following chapters.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Blaise Cendrars, *L'homme foudroyé* (Paris: Denoël, 1945), 13. Translation: “to write is to be burned alive, but it is also to be born from one’s ashes.”

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Romantic Enlightenment: Bleaching out the Shadows*

“Everything degenerates in the hands of man.”  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'Éducation*<sup>177</sup>

“Led astray by ambition, men trample upon *naïveté*... Lovely child! It is only at your side that I regain the simplicity of the Golden Age.”  
Louis François Jauffret, *Les Charmes de l'enfance*<sup>178</sup>

Charles Baudelaire once declared that “genius is simply childhood recovered at will.”<sup>179</sup> Such a gentle and deft uncovering of the memories, experiences, and perceptions of yesteryear, both on a personal and collective level, like the careful exposure of the yellowing pages of a dusty, attic-dwelling book to the bright daylight beyond, goes some way to describe the way in which childhood as a state and concept was being rediscovered and reconsidered in French culture and society from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Whilst debate concerning what constitutes and defines a child and the state of childhood has existed in some capacity for centuries, and pervades much of the discourse in Chapter One, it was the cataclysmic clash between Enlightenment doctrine and Romantic thought which is generally considered to have marked a shift in not only concepts of children and childhood, but in the degree of interest and importance afforded to them: “the child

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<sup>177</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or on Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 37.

<sup>178</sup> Louis François Jauffret, *Les Charmes de l'enfance, et les Plaisirs de l'amour maternel*, Volume 1 (Paris : 1801), 2-8. (Translations for this text are all derived from Adriana S. Benzaquén, “Childhood, Identity and Human Science in the Enlightenment”, *History Workshop Journal*, No. 57 (2004): 34-57).

<sup>179</sup> Charles Baudelaire quoted in John House, “Curiosité” in *Impressions of French Modernity: Art and Literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 33.

as an object of scientific knowledge [...] emerged just as the Romantics were discovering in the child the key to adult identity.”<sup>180</sup>

Prior to this, not only were children relegated to the sub-category of man on a smaller scale, bereft of personhood and socio-cultural significance, but their mistreatment was intensified by their damning characterisation at the hands of the almighty establishment of the Church. The extremeness of religious belief in this period, that is to say, the years encompassing the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, prescribed popular assertions stating that “children were not only conceived in sin, but born in utter corruption.”<sup>181</sup> Accordingly, early childhood became the designated “period when the child’s innate evilness had to be pushed out of his being” through a harsh regime typified by stern moral instruction and threats of Hellish suffering for the disobedient.<sup>182 183</sup> Such was the distaste for children and childhood before the shift of the eighteenth century, that nostalgia, or anything resembling persistent sentimentality for one’s years gone by, was declared by seventeenth-century Swiss doctor Johannes Hoffer to be a physical disease treatable with leeches, purges, and opium.<sup>184</sup> This proves testament to both this era’s reticence to matters of the mind and emotional sphere, incidentally that which is often considered synonymous with the child’s world, as well as the extent to which Enlightenment teaching and the subsequent Romantic rebuke marked a dramatic shift in both intellectual and popular thought.

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<sup>180</sup> Adriana S. Benzaquén, “Childhood, Identity and Human Science in the Enlightenment”, *History Workshop Journal*, No. 57 (2004), 53.

<sup>181</sup> Gary K. Clabaugh, “Perspectives on Childhood”, *Educational Horizons*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1991), 7.

<sup>182</sup> Bette P. Goldstone, “Views of Childhood in Children’s Literature Over Time”, *Language Arts*, Vol. 63, No. 8 (1986), 793.

<sup>183</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature* (Allen & Unwin: Crows Nest, 1985), 2.

<sup>184</sup> Dennis Walder, “Remembering Rousseau: Nostalgia and the Responsibilities of the Self”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2005), 424.

Discourse on the newly considered significance of children and childhood in the Enlightenment period can be described as something of an entanglement of intertwining, overlapping, and clashing ideas and theories. Inspired by writing from as early as René Descartes' 1637 treatise *Discours de la Méthode* (*Discourse on Method*), French pedagogic scholarship of this epoch was heavily punctuated by some half a dozen key thinkers and influences from France and beyond, often concurrently producing works which both challenged and consolidated the findings and theories of their fellow academics. Prominent French physician and writer Alphonse-Louis Leroy (1742-1816) adopted a retrospective consideration of the period of the Enlightenment and its role in contemporary understandings of childhood, culminating in his desire to assemble "a science of childhood."<sup>185</sup>

In her 2004 article 'Childhood, Identity and Human Science in the Enlightenment', Adriana Benzaquén deemed the Enlightenment to have been largely overlooked in terms of the significance of its scholarship on the study of childhood. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties inherent to pedagogic research, for "given that adults do not recall the origin of their ideas and knowledge, nor can they directly observe the contents of children's minds, [we must consider] to what extent the scientific study of children [is/was] empirically possible", Benzaquén nevertheless draws attention to what can be understood as the coinciding of the arrival of the child as a focus of scientific study and the emergence of ground-breaking notions of selfhood and identity: "Childhood is entangled with the adult's present identity because the interiorised self, the sense of a self within, is perceived as internalised

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<sup>185</sup> Alphonse-Louis Leroy quoted in Benzaquén, "Childhood", 35.

memory of the past, the outcome of a personal history.”<sup>186</sup> In this sense, this era’s apparent ‘discovery of childhood’ is perhaps as much a reference to “the child who waited to be discovered within each adult as an aspect of self [...] fully consummated with the introspective work of memory in the age of Enlightenment” as it was a realignment of what it meant to be a child in real time based upon observation and representation in situ.<sup>187</sup> Accordingly, this gives credence to Leroy’s assertion in 1803 that “it is therefore the child who teaches man to know himself.”<sup>188</sup>

This chapter comprises an exploration of this particular notion, analysing the emerging discovery of childhood from out of the shadows, as a simultaneous embodiment of self and ‘other’, as ultimately a means to self-discovery, against the backdrop of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. In the first instance, this begins with an investigation into the scholarship of various prominent academics of the eighteenth century, excavating from their literature the sometimes extensive though often forgotten or overshadowed study of children and childhood. The bulk of the chapter is then dedicated to reviewing its relationship alongside the work of the most widely-recognised French scholar of pedagogy of the Enlightenment era, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), analysing his complex and often contradictory philosophy, chiefly that found in his seminal work *Émile, ou De l’éducation* (*Emile, or On Education*) (1762), considering the origins behind, effects of, and reaction to his extensive contribution to concepts and practices relating to children and childhood.

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<sup>186</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 36-38.

<sup>187</sup> Larry Wolff, “When I Imagine a Child: The Idea of Childhood and the Philosophy of Memory in the Enlightenment”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1998), 381.

<sup>188</sup> Alphonse-Louis Leroy, *Médecine Maternelle, ou l’art d’élever et de conserver les enfants* (Paris, 1803), xxii.

With much Enlightenment philosophy arguably stemming from Cartesian seeds, it is interesting to note Descartes' inherent regret towards the period of childhood, remarking that because “we were all of us children before we were men, for a long time governed by our appetites and our tutors, who often contradicted each another, [our judgements could never be] as pure or as firm as they would have been if we had had the full use of our reason from the moment we were born.”<sup>189</sup> Whilst such views are reflected, if not regurgitated, by some of Descartes' contemporaries (Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, for example), it is more his advocacy of unyielding rationalism, his unrelenting method of doubt, and his development of the dualistic doctrine, more broadly defined by an overall scepticism, which proved especially influential to his academic descendants.

John Locke's (1632-1704) stringent spearheading of empiricism was in the first instance inspired by Cartesian rationalism, and in turn counselled his rejection of the notion of harbouring innate truths, in favour of embellishing the mind with observations, lessons, experiences, and perceptions. In his works *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), this was most famously denoted by his concept of the child's mind as a blank sheet, or *tabula rasa*, void of character and ideas, to which we gradually add, through learning and guidance, “the inscriptions of experience.”<sup>190</sup> In turn, Locke considered an observation thereof supportive of his claims on the superiority of empirical practices, for the study of children would open the doorway to a rationalist and evidence-based understanding of the mind overall: “Follow a child from birth and observe the alteration that time makes, and you shall find, as the

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<sup>189</sup> René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, ed. J.M. Fataud (Paris: Dessain et Tolra, 1984), 64.

<sup>190</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 383.

mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think on.”<sup>191</sup> In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), David Hume (1711-1776) expanded on strands of Locke’s work, drawing upon his assertions that memory had to be bound in past perceptions to buttress his own conclusions that personal identity was “fictitious”, based upon perceptions, experiences, and the influence of others, as opposed to originating as an innate human substance; in other words, like Locke’s *tabula rasa*, identity as much as knowledge remains empty or non-existent without the epitaphs of education, experience, and influence.<sup>192</sup>

Condillac’s (1714-1780) reflections are somewhat more sombre, rooted in his Cartesian belief that childhood was an impediment to rational human knowledge. Deeming its emptiness as not only a sign of its uselessness but also evidence of its inaccessibility, Condillac was frustrated by the very existence of childhood and the infuriating obtuseness he understood it to pose in his quest for rational answers and knowledge: “We do not know how to recall the ignorance in which we were born; it is a state which leaves no traces.”<sup>193</sup> Condillac extended Locke’s theory on the inexistence of innate ideas to the lack of innate abilities, drawing upon the symbol of the statue to denote the physical being of man thus far unanimated by senses, which could similarly be attributed to the child, a person only in shape, who simply waits for time to tick by until he can awaken to the experience of mental engagement that will only arrive, according to Condillac, in adulthood. Accordingly, in contrast to the advice of Locke and Hume, and indeed others, on the advantages of returning to and

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<sup>191</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. John Yolton (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 56.

<sup>192</sup> David Hume quoted in Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 379.

<sup>193</sup> Étienne Bonnot Abbé de Condillac, *Treatise on the Sensations*, quoted in Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 386.



observing childhood in order to locate the origins of knowledge, Condillac instead adopted a bitter “philosophical repudiation of childhood, towards the envisioning of a world altogether without children.”<sup>194</sup>

This contrasts quite dramatically with the standpoint of naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), and indeed his contemporary, educator Louis-François Jauffret (1770-1840), both of whose proximity to the burgeoning Romantic Movement (having produced scholarship in the latter decades of the eighteenth century and beyond) offers some explanation of their tendency towards a more sentimental approach. Buffon dedicated some forty years of his life to his thirty-six-volume encyclopaedic masterpiece of scientific, anthropological, and pedagogic study entitled *Histoire Naturelle (Natural History)* (1749-1788), which he endeavoured to make accessible to both the learned and the simply curious, including children. Whilst Buffon’s expertise was drawn from his position as intendant of the Jardin du Roi (Royal Botanical Gardens) in Paris, a significant portion of his research was dedicated to the anatomical, physiological, and psychological study of the child, culminating in his conclusion that children are born fragile and weak, and require constant care from parents and educators. Buffon advocated simple, country rearing in an affectionate and supportive atmosphere, remarking that the parent-child union should be strengthened, not diminished, for after all, it “is natural, because it is necessary.”<sup>195</sup>

Buffon’s favour for this “medico-pedagogic intervention” was largely supported by his establishment in his fourteenth volume, *Nomenclature des Singes*

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<sup>194</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 379.

<sup>195</sup> Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle* (Vol. 7: *Discours sur la nature des animaux*), (Paris, 1753), 29.

(*Nomenclature of Apes*) (1766), of his dualistic theory of education.<sup>196</sup> In basic terms, Buffon posited that there are two types of education in existence; individual education (common to both man and animal) and species education (unique to man). Individual education is much slower for children than it is for animals, for the latter must learn very quickly how to be able to do most everything in order to survive, whereas human young are far less advanced at an early age and need the help of adults. In turn, such slowness in individual education allows for the gradual process of species education, affording the child time to become cultivated in a fashion inaccessible to animals. It is through such assertions that Buffon refuted the claims of Rousseau, for example, pointing out that if a child was born as wise and strong as Rousseau suggested, their individual education would be far too quick as to facilitate the species education required in order to awaken their minds.<sup>197</sup>

Significantly, Buffon's reference here to what can be summarised as an innate animal or material principle in contrast to a decidedly spiritual and human one awakened and developed through education is as much about his moralistic outlook as it is his scientific one. Not only was he unconvinced by the staunch rationalism of Locke's loyalty to empirical observation, firm instead in the impossibility of purely didactic research into childhood – "Have we not forgotten everything that happened in the darkness of our childhood? Do not enquiries of this nature imply presumption and temerity?" – but Buffon's focus on the inherent weakness of the child and their consequential reliance upon care from adults pointed to a greater issue about the importance of sociability and empathy as key elements of human nature on a more general scale: "Buffon's child is not an internalised

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<sup>196</sup> Benzaquén, "Childhood", 53.

<sup>197</sup> Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle* (Vol. 14: *Nomenclature des Singes*), (Paris, 1766), 33-34.

distillation of the adult's past but a separate being located outside. By 'exteriorising' the child, Buffon emphasised the centrality of childhood from a biological or evolutionary perspective, [and] also created a moral argument based on the belief that to care for the weak and vulnerable other is what comes to define a human being."<sup>198</sup> <sup>199</sup> Drawing upon moralistic influences and theories relating to evolution, the biogenetic law, and even colonial issues, Buffon, befitting of his encyclopaedic roots and tendencies, establishes connections beyond the scientific sphere between the study of childhood and that of mankind and human nature as a whole.<sup>200</sup>

It is perhaps the figure of Louis-François Jauffret who best represents the growing disharmony at the turn of the nineteenth century between what was now a well-established Enlightenment following and the emerging influence of Romantic opposition thereof. This poet and educator's life and career was characterised by a constant tension between his interest in clinical studies, and his inherent draw to sentimental writing for children. It was during the years following the Revolution that Jauffret established his affinity with the natural world, retreating to a quiet existence in the countryside where he happily observed the innocent play of seemingly care-free children. It was in this period that he wrote his four-volume collection of fables *Les charmes de l'enfance, et les plaisirs de l'amour maternel* (*The charms of childhood and the pleasures of maternal love*) (1791), whose introduction comprised a series of 'idylls', defined by Jauffret as "the description of

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<sup>198</sup> Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle* (Vol. 3: *Description du cabinet du Roi*), (Paris, 1749), 363.

<sup>199</sup> Benzaquén, "Childhood", 43.

<sup>200</sup> In brief terms, the biogenetic law refers to a hypothesis which posits that the development of a specific organism from embryo to birth (ontogeny) resembles the process by which the same animal's remote ancestors evolved (photogeny). As discussed later in the chapter, this theory was developed and linked with other fields of study, such as anthropology, education, and psychology. By extension, anthropological strands of this theory were harnessed to support some race ideologies proffered by supporters of colonialism.

a landscape animated by the expression of a feeling.”<sup>201</sup> These idylls, “unvarying, embodying an overriding sentiment (and sentimentality)” are typical of the extent to which “Jauffret’s literary universe was structured around the opposition between the simple innocence of childhood and the deceitful passions of men”, adopting what resonates to contemporary scholars as something of a ‘Rousseauian’ outlook, projecting “childhood, nature, sensibility and domesticity as antidotes to the turmoil of the cities and the confusing violence unleashed by revolution.”<sup>202</sup>

Continuing this theme, Jauffret organised his annual *promenades à la campagne* from 1801 onwards, consisting of walks and lectures through nature spots in Paris, designed to function in tandem with his engaging youth literature to provoke for children “the happiness that may result for man from the study of himself and the contemplation of nature.”<sup>203</sup> These educational walks in many ways “represented Jauffret’s most successful attempt to strike a balance between sentiment and science”, as for the most part, his literary reputation as ‘Friend of Children’ was in constant battle against his desire for scientific discovery as a founding member of the Society of Observers of Man in 1800.<sup>204</sup> Jauffret’s science did not remove him from the realm of childhood; quite the reverse, in fact, for the motto of the Observers, ‘know thyself’, was a nod to the belief that “the study of the child was the foundation of the knowledge of man.”<sup>205</sup> Rather, Jauffret felt divided

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<sup>201</sup> Louis-François Jauffret, *Les Charmes de l’enfance, et les plaisirs de l’amour maternel*, (Vol. 1) (Paris, 1801), xxx.

<sup>202</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 45-46.

<sup>203</sup> Robert-Marie Reboul, *Louis-Françoise Jauffret: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres* (Paris, 1869), 41-42. Some of the earliest books geared towards children (e.g. *Orbis Pictus*, 1659, the first children’s picture book, and John Newbury’s *Pretty Little Pocketbook*, 1744, a behavioural manual) offered stern moral and educational lessons, whereas Jauffret’s copious publications succeeded in presenting a unique balance between learning, entertaining and inspiring, thereby engaging with a young audience in a way that acknowledges their mental capacity more positively.

<sup>204</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 51.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

by his reticence to subject children to clinical scrutiny in the pursuit of scientific answers for which he nevertheless yearned. Jauffret aborted or neglected a good many scientific projects, which could be construed as evidence of the moral dilemma he faced between sentimentally advocating loving family relations, whilst simultaneously sanctioning the potential subordination of children's psychological well-being in favour of the epistemological advancement of man.<sup>206</sup> Jauffret's frequent distractions from his clinical studies was made permanent, perhaps rather conveniently, when the Observers society continued to struggle without positive results and effectively collapsed under Napoleon's reconstruction of the National Institute in 1803. For Jauffret, the retreat to children's literature that this facilitated marked a relinquishment of the guilt he associated with empirical endeavours, and a return to a soft and rosy world of romanticised storybooks.

However, the persistence of the cultural mainstay that "all children's books are about ideals" offers some indication of the inconsistency by which such literature is characterised, and in particular, the theories and ideas promulgated by that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).<sup>207</sup> Operating amongst the aforementioned scholars of pedagogy of the Enlightenment era, Rousseau's far-reaching philosophy cemented his position as arguably the most popular and influential scholar in his field and of his time. Analysis in this chapter will chiefly comprise that of his pivotal 1762 treatise on education and civilisation entitled

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<sup>206</sup> A prominent example of such moral debate is that of Victor of Aveyron (also known as the 'wild boy of Aveyron'), who was a feral child found at around the age of twelve in a forest, captured, and brought to civilisation. Despite numerous attempts at escape, Victor was recaptured and submitted to much study and scrutiny by academic and medical professionals, including Observers member Roch-Ambroise Cucurron Sicard, but most notably Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, as to the effects of education, language training, and other such efforts as 'civilising' the boy. The case proved of enormous interest and influence in Enlightenment philosophy and colonial discourse in relation to concepts of the 'Other'.

<sup>207</sup> Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 1.

*Émile, ou De l'éducation* (*Émile, or On Education*), widely considered the “best and most important” of all his literature, but will invite contributions from other relevant works of his extensive corpus in order to gauge an expansive grasp of his theories.<sup>208</sup> Whilst certain aspects of *Émile*, considered to be rife with irreverence, resulted in a backlash that saw its banning and public burning in Paris and Geneva upon publication, its progressive appeal gained significant impetus during the Revolution, after which its impact and popularity secured its position, to a greater or lesser degree, in dominating theory on pedagogy, subjectivity, and introspection until the advent of Freudian thinking.<sup>209</sup>

It is perhaps the very dichotomy of Rousseau’s work, his role in the creation of the concept of the Romantic child, forged in amongst the crux-like conflict between an abhorrence for Reason and its formalism, and a tentative reappraisal of feeling, which sealed his positive heralding amongst those similarly intrigued and perplexed by their epoch’s grappling with old and new; in this way, Rousseau, his work, “and its sentiments had a universal influence on the cultivated mind.”<sup>210</sup> However, the longevity and significance of what were often such muddled ‘Rousseauian’ theories could be construed as a major factor in the ongoing cacophony of conflicting concepts and misapprehensions which have pervaded the study of children and childhood for centuries to follow. To mirror a metaphor utilised by psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (and one whose botanical basis will prove pervasively symbolic), in much the same way that a child whose thoughts, issues, and anxieties remain riddled and unresolved will find its “mental health in future

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<sup>208</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J.M. Cohen (New York : Penguin, 1953), 529-530. *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (*Émile, or On Education*) will hereafter be referred to as *Émile*.

<sup>209</sup> Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 46.

<sup>210</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe quoted in Ariel and Will Durant, *The Story of Civilisation Volume 10: Rousseau and Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 889.

years is not planted in firm soil”, scholarship in the related field of pedagogy which tends to stem from a single, unsteady root will likely suffer from similar frailty and inconsistency in the years that follow.<sup>211</sup>

Before exploring the content of Rousseau’s *Émile*, excavating the contradictions and inconsistencies which run to its very core, it is worth noting the incongruity of its textual nature and form. Whilst it is true that Rousseau’s script was likely to straddle more than one genre by virtue of its complex intermingling of both Enlightenment and Romantic ideologies, his unabashed passion for the subject poured out dramatically onto the pages, forming what essentially became “a pedagogic romance.”<sup>212</sup> Drawing upon the Académie’s dictionary definition of ‘romantic’ as pertaining “ordinarily to places and landscapes which recall to the imagination the descriptions of poems and novels”, it is scarcely surprising that such fancifulness and anti-realism would strike at odds with the “substance and the marrow of a rational and truly modern treatise of pedagogy” supposedly contained within “this improbable and chimerical romance.”<sup>213 214</sup> In a style characteristic of his dogged obdurateness, Rousseau’s *Émile* essentially comprises “the pursuit of verisimilitude in fiction”, disguising an extravagant and self-adulating exercise in sentimental introspection, rosy storytelling, and scholarly shoe-horning as an academically enlightening discourse delivered in a refreshingly modern, relatable, and inspiring way.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1960), 259.

<sup>212</sup> Jules Steeg, “Introduction” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile; or, Concerning Education*, trans. Eleanor Worthington (Boston: D.C. Heath & Company, 1889), 1.

<sup>213</sup> Albert Thibaudet, *Histoire de la littérature française de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 1936), 116.

<sup>214</sup> Steeg, “Introduction”, 6.

<sup>215</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 44.

It certainly proved an inspiration, functioning as a sort of catalyst in the production of rather introspective and non-realistic writing about and/or for childhood, personal or otherwise, resulting in what Peter Gay has described as the late-nineteenth century becoming “swamped with unremarkable self-revelations [proceeding] in Rousseau’s shadow.”<sup>216</sup> Ultimately, Rousseau’s text comes to operate, as most all literature aimed in some way towards children does, as an agent of control, for “it has always been adults [...] who have sought to define childhood, or more often to negate it, or to exploit it, and sometimes to idealise it.”<sup>217</sup>

In a tone reminiscent of Gay’s critique of the nineteenth-century literary fashion for unwarranted self-indulgence, it has been said that Rousseau’s initiation thereof, his planting of the seed of “the cult of Feeling, of Original Innocence, and of the child lends itself readily to egotism, irresponsibility, evasion of the real, and nostalgic reversion”, an analysis of which in relation to Rousseau forms the bulk of the rest of this chapter. Drawing from Locke’s influential foundation of the *tabula rasa*, that is to say, the child as a blank sheet, the notion of “Original Innocence [...] in the child had already won some currency as a retort to Original Sin”, not least as part of the shift from religion that the waning power of the Church and beckoning gravitas of the Enlightenment facilitated.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, in a style characteristic of Rousseau’s inconsistency, his discourse all the same fixated on a somewhat Romantic notion of the paradisiacal roots of childhood. Whilst Original Innocence was a counter to the longstanding insistence on Original Sin and thus the inherent evilness of a newborn, it nevertheless pandered to the same doctrinal rhetoric of

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<sup>216</sup> Peter Gay, *The Naked Heart* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 106-109.

<sup>217</sup> Michael Morpurgo, “Foreword” in Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>218</sup> F.R. Leavis, “Introduction”, in Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 17.



one's spiritual beginnings, an extreme level of purity which is not only potentially ridiculous in its absoluteness, but in essentially deeming the child "cleaner than Adam before he tasted the apple", remains inextricably linked to biblical teaching.<sup>219</sup> In this way united, both Rousseau and Locke were "convinced that children were fundamentally different from adults", belonging to a sort of utopian, non-earthly kingdom yet unsullied by the effects of later life.<sup>220</sup>

This concept contributes significantly to one of the cornerstones of Rousseau's pedagogic theory, regurgitated frequently by more modern figures such as Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens, that "l'homme naît bon [...] et la société le deprave."<sup>221</sup> Although Rousseau was in accordance with Buffon's encouragement of a child's education based in nature, he disagreed with his assertions on the inherent weakness of the child, instead convinced by the natural strength of the child not yet impaired by the ills of experience and adulthood: "the child is still complete; it has not yet succumbed to the alienation that separates the 'being' from the 'appearance'", that is to say, its personhood has not yet been disintegrated by the corrosive effects of man's fickle whims.<sup>222</sup> Ironically, it was Rousseau's belief that the effects of man, including education (though of course not his own) were responsible for the ruin of the otherwise pure and whole beings of childhood by introducing them to all the evils of man's creation: "the 'pure state of nature' for Rousseau [...] is precisely the stage in which that which distinctive of *human* nature

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<sup>219</sup> Alice Law, *The Cult of the Child-Spirit in Modern Literature*, in Goldstone, "Views of Childhood", 793.

<sup>220</sup> Clabaugh, "Perspectives", 7.

<sup>221</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau quoted in Raymond Trousson, "Victor Hugo juge de Jean-Jacques Rousseau", *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (1986), 982. Translation: "Man is born good, and society corrupts him."

<sup>222</sup> Werner Hoffman, "The Art of Unlearning" in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3.

has not yet manifested itself [...] Man – once he becomes truly man – is thus by his own constitution condemned to endless dissatisfaction, to a ceaseless pursuit of goals which when attained leave him no more content than before.”<sup>223</sup>

Therein lies one of the most prominent paradoxes of Rousseau’s treatise, around which rotates the ongoing defence of the author’s own personal shortcomings. Utilising his theory to justify his actions, Rousseau simultaneously built upon his opposition to Buffon’s theory and defended his own notorious neglect of his own five children by using the apparent dependence of the child upon the adult as merely a symptom of societal maltreatment as grounds for a relinquishment of persistent sociability or relations between the two. Confusingly, whilst Rousseau advocated education – “without childhood and education man could only be an imbecile” – he concurrently blamed it not only for the eventual corruption of the child – “children are less corrupted by the harm they see than by that you teach them” – but also the future downfall of man as a whole: “Finally, when this enslaved child, this little tyrant, full of learning and devoid of sense, enfeebled alike in mind and body, is cast upon the world, he there by his unfitness, by his pride, and by all his vices, makes us deplore human wretchedness and perversity.”<sup>224 225</sup>

Moreover, whilst Rousseau was adamant in his belief in the ultimate goodness and strength of the child, he chose to send his own children away to a foundling school for the purposes of rendering them more robust, which, whilst contradicting the very basis of his argument of the naturally sturdy child, allowed his attention to remain egotistically focused on the production in *Émile* of a most self-

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<sup>223</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau’s Discourse on Inequality”, *Modern Philology*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1923), 177-178.

<sup>224</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 391.

<sup>225</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 60, 22.

aggrandizing and wildly unrealistic work of literature: “in depicting an extraordinary education undertaken by an extraordinary tutor, he once more neglected, in thought as much as in his own practice, the ordinary, everyday association between adults and children.”<sup>226</sup> This typifies the degree of Rousseau’s quixotism, for the depth of his despair for adulthood – “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in irons!” – is matched only by the extent of his idealisation of childhood.<sup>227</sup> Buffon himself remarked upon this, declaring Rousseau’s concept of nature as merely “an ideal, imaginary state which has never existed”, giving rise to the idea of exotic deism with which he rather wistfully associated the child.<sup>228</sup> Such a concept has, like many of those associated with ‘Rousseauian’ philosophy, seeped into the discourse of more modern thinkers, with psychoanalyst Carl Jung referring to “the paradise of childhood from which we imagine we have emerged.”<sup>229</sup>

The tendency in the writings of academics of the twentieth century to fixate on the topic of nostalgia perhaps provides some indicator as to the root of not only Rousseau’s unrealistic adulation of childhood, but also his general difficulty or reticence to retain a single line of argument or instruction; “the notion that children are in a higher state of spiritual perception than adults, because of their nearness to their birth and so to a pre-existence in Heaven [offers] a hint of Eden [so] the earth appears as beautiful and numinous [and thus] growing up becomes synonymous with the loss of Paradise.”<sup>230</sup> In other words, we can perhaps in part attribute Rousseau’s apparent respect for children and their state – “Childhood has its own methods of seeing, thinking, and feeling. Nothing shows less sense than to try to

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<sup>226</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 44.

<sup>227</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract” quoted in Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 395.

<sup>228</sup> Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle* (Vol. 14: *Nomenclature des Singes*), (Paris, 1766), 36.

<sup>229</sup> C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Waukegan (IL): Fontana Press, 1995), 272.

<sup>230</sup> Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 8-9.

substitute our own methods for these” – alongside his contradictory implementation of an unrelenting system of controlled educational guidance, to the tension felt in trying to simultaneously admire and conserve a condition or notion whose authenticity is not without influence or doubt in the first place.<sup>231</sup>

My assertion that Rousseau’s work is largely “characterised by a great deal of wavering between conflicting tendencies” is by no means uncharted, nor is a general distaste for his ideas and processes unheard of.<sup>232</sup> From contemporary social historian Hugh Cunningham’s scathing statement, “‘We know nothing of childhood,’ says Rousseau. But of course, Rousseau thought he did”, to Voltaire’s declaring the philosopher to be “such a knave”, Rousseau has succeeded in ruffling feathers for centuries.<sup>233</sup> <sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, this tends to remain overshadowed by the precedence of his lofty reputation garnered over time. In spite of this, such paradoxes, discrepancies, and irritations in his discourse prove numerous and complexly interconnected, and thus best understood by first addressing some of the most prominent strands of his pedagogic theory.

In summary, through *Émile*, Rousseau seeks to present a style or system of education whereby man may retain his innate goodness, his *natural* self, from childhood while remaining a member of and indeed survive an otherwise corruptive collective of society. Whilst this involves posing several fundamental philosophical and political questions regarding the interplay of individual and society, Rousseau tackles the task by introducing the fictional, novelistic format of *Émile* and his tutor by way of demonstrating how such an ideal citizen might be achieved through a very

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<sup>231</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 52.

<sup>232</sup> Lovejoy, “Supposed Primitivism”, 172.

<sup>233</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 113.

<sup>234</sup> Durant/Durant, *Story of Civilisation Volume 10*, 191.

particular pedagogical programme. The extensive text was divided into five books, the first three of which are dedicated to the young child Émile, the fourth to his adolescent years, and the fifth to his domestic and civic life, drawing upon his relationship with his female counterpart, Sophie, and in turn her own educative experience.

It is unsurprising that in his admiration for what he deemed the natural state of one's childhood, Rousseau prescribed education in a related environment, removing "Émile from civilisation, isolating and educating him in nature, only to integrate him back into civil society, rejuvenated as a co-operative citizen."<sup>235</sup> The authority afforded to nature is the central pivot upon which the majority of Émile's education centres. In the same way that Rousseau advised us not to tamper with the *natural* way of the child, this has been derived from his counsel for the utmost respect and acceptance of nature's truths: "Watch nature carefully, and follow the paths she traces out for you."<sup>236</sup> Not only was Rousseau steadfast in his belief in nature as a provider and transmitter of wisdom (thereby granting it to those deemed closest – children), but he was also convinced of its enactment of wisdom: "Nature intends that children shall be children before they are men. If we insist on reversing this order, we shall have fruit early indeed, but unripe, tasteless, and liable to decay."<sup>237</sup>

Accordingly, Rousseau's treatise is one which advocates the natural way of things, it "aims at restoring the individual's liberty heretofore deprived because of inequality resulting from dependence on others" by theoretically propagating

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<sup>235</sup> Daniel R. Guernsey, "Childhood and aesthetic education: the role of *Émile* in the formation of Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*" in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 73.

<sup>236</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 19.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

strength of mind and body through the exercising of a curious and investigatory mind.<sup>238</sup> Essentially, Rousseau purports to sanction the imbuelement of the child with a sense of being “completely independent of the influence of other wills, to possess what later came to be called moral autonomy”, as opposed to subjecting them to doctrinal spoon-feeding: “Do not forget that it is rarely your business to suggest what he ought to learn; it is for him to want to learn, to seek and to find it. You should put it within his reach.”<sup>239</sup> <sup>240</sup> However, just as ‘You should put it within his reach’ betrays him, this childhood independence of which he preaches is another of Rousseau’s falsehoods. Whilst the premise of his educative style proposes that “Émile is scarcely aware that he is under instruction”, this very statement highlights the paradoxical nature of his thought and practice; is not directed tutelage masquerading as independent learning more devious than that which openly instructs and guides?<sup>241</sup> It has been said that Rousseau advocated games in the dark for children, convinced of their benefit to sensory awareness, but it seems rather that he was playing his own such game, placing the child in the proverbial dark as he looks on from his illuminated perch.

And so whilst Rousseau claimed to pertain to an alternative view of and approach towards children, their literature, and their pedagogy – a revolutionary view and approach, even – he in fact merely subscribes to the same self-serving manipulation of what was fast becoming a highly-charged metaphor for public or personal harnessing, thereby exacerbating an already complex situation in which

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<sup>238</sup> Sally J. Scholz, “That All Children Should Be Free: Beauvoir, Rousseau, and Childhood”, *Hypatia*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2010), 396.

<sup>239</sup> Mary Nichols, “Rousseau’s Novel Education in the *Emile*”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1985), 536.

<sup>240</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 170.

<sup>241</sup> Guernsey, “Aesthetic education”, 77.

“the concept of childhood is dynamic, changing to fit the needs of the community” or individual.<sup>242</sup> Accordingly, whilst Rousseau’s treatise ostensibly sought to promulgate independence from the influence of others and a preservation and encouragement of learning and experience based in nature, it was in practice simply control and manipulation of a different design: “Rousseau’s ideal was contradictory. On the one hand, Rousseau argued that a child is best brought up by giving him freedom to express his ‘natural inclinations.’ On the other hand, a child, in Rousseau’s vision, is not really free: he or she is under the total control of a tutor.”<sup>243</sup> Rousseau’s programme of education becomes a sort of bargaining negotiation for the child to earn a sort of curtailed liberty, which, to those who have already lost it, cannot be allowed to flourish unchecked elsewhere: “what appears natural is in fact indoctrination; [...] his is the apprenticeship to freedom.”<sup>244</sup>

A quote from Rousseau’s *Confessions* (1789), when speaking of childhood memories, is particularly revealing in this regard, exposing the desperate sense of his self-interest: “It is as though already sensing life slipping away, I were trying to catch hold of it again at its beginnings.”<sup>245</sup> This kind of “sentimental appeal to nostalgic regret” which can be seen as symptomatic of the Romantic following became twisted and warped into something far more potent, by which the freshness and purity of the child becomes sullied and muddled by attempts to harness it as antidote to the jealous and regretful malaise of adulthood.<sup>246</sup> When Michel Foucault stated that “children are precious because they replenish a population”, he was most

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<sup>242</sup> Goldstone, “Views of Childhood”, 792.

<sup>243</sup> Linda A. Pollock, “Foreword”, in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, by Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), xix.

<sup>244</sup> Scholz, “All Children”, 405.

<sup>245</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, trans. Cohen, 20.

<sup>246</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 46.

probably referring to their physical, biological replacement with newness of aging, dying adults, but it can be equally construed as suggestive of the value associated with the child's capacity and propensity to be utilised in the machination of rejuvenating and buttressing adult spirit and standing on both personal and collective levels.<sup>247</sup> Whilst Rousseau's credo professes to be one which rues the day the child, bereft of his method of education, degenerates from his purest to his most corrupt, fulfilling a looming "threat that they might... maybe... perhaps... become us", it is as much a desperate attempt at reversing and regressing for oneself.<sup>248</sup>

When Rousseau, in castigating the practice of swaddling, instructs that "the new-born child needs to stretch and to move his limbs so as to draw them out of the torpor in which, rolled into a ball, they have so long remained, [...] we cripple them to prevent their laming themselves", he is ironically outlining his own wrongdoing.<sup>249</sup> Firm in the belief that "reasoning should not begin too soon", Rousseau endeavours to drip-feed the child, to not only "unfold the powers of children in due proportion to their age", but to limit their exposure to the wisdom he claims to possess, to control and administer knowledge dose by dose, as and when he chooses.<sup>250 251</sup>

Such advice permeates Rousseau's other discourse, such as during the Ninth Walk of his *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (*Reveries of a Solitary Walker*) (1776-1778), in which he declared "nothing requires greater discernment and choice of just expression than the discourse we hold with children" – far from deeming the

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<sup>247</sup> Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Verso Publishing, 2003), 70.

<sup>248</sup> Daniel Thomas Cook, "A politics of becoming: When 'child' is not enough". *Childhood*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015), 5.

<sup>249</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 15-16.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>251</sup> Steeg, "Introduction", 6.



child in possession of the natural wisdom and insight of which he had previously preached, Rousseau masquerades his own appetite for control as concern for the inclination for misapprehension on the part of a child not sufficiently enlightened.<sup>252</sup> Instead of offering an educational liberation, a metaphorical and literal stretching of the limbs and mind in the space and fresh air of ungated nature, Rousseau simply presents another type of binding, tailoring his own paradoxical style of “well-regulated liberty” to produce a system which

“consists in isolating a child from the rest of the world; in creating expressly for him a tutor, who is a phoenix among his kind; in depriving him of father, mother, brothers, and sisters, his companions in study; in surrounding him with a perpetual charlatanism, under the pretext of following nature; and in showing him only through the veil of a factitious atmosphere the society in which he is to live.”<sup>253 254</sup>

In setting out his pedagogic treatise, awash with the endowments of expectation and duty upon adults for the welfare of children, authentic or otherwise, that gained significant gravitas alongside the post-Revolution sense of responsibility towards human life, Rousseau conveniently heaped the bulk of the onus upon women: “If mothers are not real mothers, children are not real children.”<sup>255</sup> Whilst “Rousseau is very free in calling on Nature, on good old Mother Nature” for her innate and almighty wisdom, he is similarly hasty to charge her with the subjugation

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<sup>252</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of J.J Rousseau: With the Reveries of the Solitary Walker (Volume 1)* (London: J. Bew, 1783), 280.

<sup>253</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 54.

<sup>254</sup> Steeg, “Introduction”, 6.

<sup>255</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 18.

of her own sex through the example of “Sophie, a woman who knows how to stay within the limits Nature has assigned to her.”<sup>256</sup> Perhaps inspired by the heavy memory of his own mother (as so many male figures featuring in this thesis seem to be), who died giving birth to him, Rousseau was convinced of the *natural* obligation of females to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their male counterparts. For Rousseau, whilst “freedom is the greatest good, [...] it is also highly gendered.”<sup>257</sup>

Accordingly, in contrast to *Émile*’s education, Sophie’s offers not even a chance of liberation as reward, and instead centres around a programme designed to instil constraint and subjection, to bury her opinions below his, “to be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, [for] these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.”<sup>258</sup> Rousseau’s misogyny is twofold, for not only does he prescribe a civic, educational, and social system built upon the subservience of women, but he also holds women responsible for its implementation at almost every level, thereby leaving them open to blame and castigation for any failures.

Although patriarchal schemes were by no means an innovation penned by Rousseau alone, his influence as a cultural and academic mainstay in Europe and beyond well into the twentieth century certainly proved a significant contributor to its endurance and veneration. Issues of gender will be explored in greater depth and complexity in later chapters, but from Thomas Day’s use of ‘Rousseauian’ logic as justification for the abuse of women and girls, to Simone de Beauvoir’s

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<sup>256</sup> Sarah Kofman and Mara Dukats, “Rousseau’s Phallocratic Ends”, *Hypatia*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1989), 123-125.

<sup>257</sup> Scholz, “All Children”, 396.

<sup>258</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Foxley, 393.

comprehension of the infantilism of women who can “exercise their freedom [...] only within the universe which has been set up before them [and] without them”, it is plain to see the breadth and longevity of Rousseau’s *Émile* and *Sophie* dynamic, as well as that of his theory in general.<sup>259</sup>

When Jung claimed that “a characteristic of childhood is that, thanks to its naiveté and unconsciousness, it sketches a more complete picture of the self, of the whole man in his pure individuality, than adulthood”, he was, from the standpoint of twentieth-century meticulousness of consciousness and introspection, referring to qualities not unlike those by which Rousseau was fascinated, and through which he simultaneously strove to manipulate.<sup>260</sup> Jung was speaking of the condition of the child’s pureness of individuality in a positive sense, celebrating the insight it offers to the innocuous observer into a simpler though more complete state of being before the corrosive influence of age, experience, and external influence upon personhood. However, this concept of purity strikes a dangerous chord with Locke’s notion of the child as *tabula rasa*, to which Rousseau found he could attach his theories in a most potent way. This concept of the child as *tabula rasa*, white sheet or blank canvas, is exactly that which facilitated Rousseau’s complex indoctrination of the child, filling this untouched expanse with his own extensive scripture.

As evidenced by many examples in history, and indeed in this thesis, children throughout most of history have tended to “experience themselves as having being in the eyes of others”, namely parents or adults, as opposed to feeling

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<sup>259</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1948), 37. Thomas Day (1748-1789) was a British author who promoted ‘Rousseauian’ education ideals and applied them to his own project to create the perfect wife, adopting a twelve-year-old foundling girl known as Sabrina Sidney. Isolating her, Day subjected her to abusive techniques such as dropping hot wax on her arms and firing blanks at her skirts in order to strengthen her fortitude and test her suitability as a wife.

<sup>260</sup> Jung, *Memories*, 272.

in possession of their own agency.<sup>261</sup> It is as though “something deep inside the child resists *being* while the gaze of the adults around him work at inculcating in him the desire to *be*” in line with the designs chosen to furnish this particular vacuity.<sup>262</sup>

Whilst Jung’s statement is one which is revealing of the championing of the ‘wise child’ prevalent from the advent of modernism, as examined in Chapter One, Rousseau’s ‘take’ on the freshness of the child is just that – a taking, a harnessing of its unmarked state for his own ends. The child not only represents newness, but is an opportunity for the vicarious renewal of the self, to facilitate through the fresh purity of the child a cleansing of one’s own experiences and errors with the advantage of hindsight and the promise of a rejuvenating regression to simpler times; in his eagerness to begin afresh, Rousseau and his followers “can feel with intensity that the world begins again with every child.”<sup>263</sup> An integral component of this theory was the assertion that “children, according to Rousseau in *Émile*, have no ‘true memory’ (*véritable mémoire*)” and instead possess only “the psychological apparatus for receiving empirical impressions.”<sup>264</sup> For in much the same way that for many “childhood was a state of not-knowing”, this blankness allows “nature [to] make the child’s brain so yielding that it receives all kinds of impressions”, a susceptible sheet upon which Rousseau can deliver his endless imprints.<sup>265 266</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Fredrika Scarth, *The Other Within* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2004), 73.

<sup>262</sup> Scholz, “All Children”, 402.

<sup>263</sup> Leavis, “Introduction”, 23.

<sup>264</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 377-378.

<sup>265</sup> Anne Higonnet, “What do you want to know about children?” in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 204.

<sup>266</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 84.

Drawing from a statement in his *Confessions* – “si je ne vaud pas mieux, au moins je suis autre” – Rousseau sees in the child an opportunity for an undoing and redoing.<sup>267</sup> Bleaching out the shadows of time and experience, of memory, the child serves as Rousseau’s vessel to rewrite history on his own terms, both on a personal and collective level, the object to his very subjective hypothesis:

“the empirical psychology pioneered [...] in the eighteenth century, produced a radical re-evaluation of memory, in its relation to [...] the revolutionary modern art of autobiography, as inaugurated in Rousseau’s *Confessions*, authoriz[ing] an altogether new deployment of the art of memory in the service of literary self-fashioning. Taken together, the evolving perspectives of the Enlightenment on memory and on memoirs also exercised a profound effect on the cultural conception of childhood, [...] summed up in Rousseau’s that the child was always the object, never the subject, of memory, that children could not consciously remember anything of consequence, and yet childhood itself was recognized essentially in remembrance.”<sup>268</sup>

Through the manipulation of the child, that is to say, both the child within ourselves and those external to us, “memory is a reordering of the present: it can cast a shadow forwards”, facilitating a reimagining of the self and one’s potential through the manipulation of the Other; the child.<sup>269</sup> This objectification and

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<sup>267</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions* in Leavis, “Introduction”, 16. Translation: “If I am not better, at least I am different.”

<sup>268</sup> Wolff, “Imagine a Child”, 377-378.

<sup>269</sup> Justin Cartwright, *White Lightning* (London: Sceptre, 2002), 200.

‘otherisation’ of the child – as non-adult, uneducated, sentimental and unempirical, ignorant and inexperienced, new and uncorrupted, fresh and empty, an impressionable vessel – serves to the advantages of the subject, i.e. the adult. The notion of “the child as an internalised and sentimentalised component of the adult self” not only points to its absorption as an object (as both a person and state) for the needs and purposes of the subject of the adult self, but provides a more general indication of the status of children and childhood, culminating in literary and scholarly production whereby “our accounts of the past are always fictions for the present, [and] all accounts of childhood are, in the end, accounts of ourselves.”<sup>270</sup> <sup>271</sup>

Testament to the innate self-centredness of Rousseau’s outlook can be found in some of his private writings. In a letter to aristocratic thinker Madame de Franceuil, Rousseau wrote of an incident during one of his famed walks when he recalls a random little child spontaneously hurrying towards him and giggling, embraced him around his legs, at which point he lamented having not shared such experiences with his own children.<sup>272</sup> Crucially, however, “what Rousseau regretted was not having failed to care for his children, but having missed the joys of fatherhood. His remorse, however sincere, was yet another manifestation of adult longing for what the child has come to represent”, as opposed to an acknowledgement of any oversights or failings on his part.<sup>273</sup>

This idea of returning to the beginning, this self-aggrandising appeal of ‘starting again’, combined with Rousseau’s fixation with the role of nature in education and society, gave rise to a connection between children, of his discourse

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<sup>270</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 36.

<sup>271</sup> Higonnet, “About children” 205.

<sup>272</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes*, eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Vol. 1) (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959), 1341.

<sup>273</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 44.

in particular, and the concept of the ‘primitive’. Rousseau’s writing has many times invited comments attributing his image of “a prelapsarian paradise” found in the natural world to his encouragement of a return to the ‘primitive’ state, to a championing of “the cult of sensibility, the noble savage, l’homme nouveau.”<sup>274 275</sup> However, not only does the noble savage not actually appear in Rousseau’s work, but any related claims of his propagation of a dramatic return to nature on social and cultural levels have largely been deemed mistaken at best: “The notion that Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality* was essentially a glorification of the State of Nature, and that its influence tended to wholly or chiefly promote ‘Primitivism’ is one of the most persistent historical errors.”<sup>276</sup> Rousseau did not idolise the ‘primitive’ or his condition; inspired by the standpoints posited by much of the discourse of this period which championed Western colonial exploits, he considered them to be creatures of the lowest rung, morally and culturally destitute in the absence of the influences of ‘civilisation’.

However, he nevertheless did acknowledge the blissful ignorance by which such a being might live; this “primeval bête humaine”, devoid of any great thought or sentiment, lives from day to the next without any concern beyond such a simple existence.<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, he posits that such an existence might contribute to what has been termed by more contemporary scholars as “the good primitive”, defined by an inherent benevolence by virtue of their ignorance of the mores susceptible to the ills of ‘civilised’ society, thereby establishing a link between the innocuousness of the ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ and that of the child, and their mutual residence in the

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<sup>274</sup> Pollock, “Foreword”, xix.

<sup>275</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 41.

<sup>276</sup> Lovejoy, “Supposed Primitivism”, 165.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-171.

ambiguous ‘state of nature’.<sup>278</sup> Some of the considerable erroneousness and confusion surrounding Rousseau’s oft perceived connection and promulgation of Primitivist tendencies, and indeed the vast topic in general, lies in a distinct lack of clarity, both conceptually and in terminology. Arthur Lovejoy tapped the surface of this particular dilemma, querying what is meant by ‘state of nature’, postulating various possibilities including chronological primordality, not being subject to political governance or authority, and lacking in cultural advancement in the arts and sciences.<sup>279</sup>

However, it is perhaps “Rousseau’s equation of childhood with cultural primitivism by comparing children to savages and by seeing them as representatives of the childhood of the human race as a whole – ideas that would later influence Freud” which bears most significance and scrutiny in this chapter; that is to say, the establishment of the child as the anthropological ‘primitive’, as explored at length in the previous chapter.<sup>280</sup> In a fashion likely to have proven influential to Ernst Haeckel’s theory of recapitulation of 1866, Rousseau found himself persuaded by a hypothesis whereby “primitives appear to be phylogenetic ‘children’ amongst the world’s races, so the European child is ontogenetic ‘primitive’, an undeveloped being within its own race [and in turn] the racially advanced child recapitulates all previous stages of phylogenetic evolution, including that represented by the present-day primitive, man still living in the wild.”<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Richard Shiff, “From Primitivist Phylogeny to Formalist Ontogeny: Roger Fry and Children’s Drawings”, in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 176.

<sup>279</sup> Lovejoy, “Supposed Primitivism”, 165-166.

<sup>280</sup> Marilyn R. Brown, “Introduction: Baudelaire between Rousseau and Freud” in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 3.

<sup>281</sup> Shiff, “Primitivist Phylogeny”, 162.



In other words, a twofold conjunction is established between the child and the ‘primitive’, in which the ‘primitive’, by virtue of its perceived simplicity and underdevelopment, is understood to represent the ‘child’ on a global scale as if it were a race of peoples, and in turn, the child comes to represent the ‘primitive’ stage of its own, single-race development, its advancement from child to adult recognised as comparable to that of the earliest and most ‘primitive’ and ‘savage’ human to the modern, ‘civilised’ version.

Whilst poignant in itself, this child-‘primitive’ equation becomes imbued with even darker hues when we consider the extent to which such a symbolic shadowing permeates treatment and behaviours as well as classification and terminology. In this way, the degradation of the child by the adult in light of the onset of the Age of Reason, the systematic or individual denial of innate personhood or culture, or failing that, concerted effort to erase what exists, to bleach away the shadowy roots of personality and memory in favour of an empty tray in which to plant one’s seeds of choice, to grow from scratch a plant of perfect design under the guise of collective responsibility, can be construed as symbolic of the personal destruction and cultural stripping of so-called ‘primitive’ societies by the colonial exploits of Western nations: “regarding children of industrialised society; they suffered the fate of native peoples living in societies evolving towards the organised state.”<sup>282</sup>

Rousseau’s efforts to ‘begin again’ through the child, his opportunistic chance of rebirth under the pretence of scholarly endeavour for the greater good becomes another example of those “great intellectual journeys that effectively

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<sup>282</sup> Shiff, “Primitivist Phylogeny”, 180.

colonised the insane, the primitive, the debased and the intoxicated” for the purposes of self-preservation and self-elevation.<sup>283</sup> Indeed, for as much as the exploits of this period sought to advance human knowledge, to *enlighten* – “we strive to know the morals of savage man, and we find them in children” – they nevertheless could not resist the opportunity upon encountering the ‘Other’, to quell and smother, not absorb and consider, to extinguish in favour of creating an opportunity to have one’s time again, and to ultimately replicate the very ills that inspired such a yearning for enlightenment in the first place.<sup>284</sup>

A recurring metaphor which emerges from this practice of this controlled reclaiming of the ‘Other’ for the purposes of reimagining or reinvigorating the subjective self, collective or individual, combined with the ongoing role of the natural world, is that of the ‘plant child’. Uprooted, its fragile pith is wrenched from the shadowy nooks of soil to be exposed to the blindingly bright *enlightenment* of sunlight, before it is replanted in the confines of a small container, gradually repotted in carefully considered stages, all the while cautiously watered and fed, fertilised and protected from external contamination or weeds, pruned and cut back by the hand of the diligent gardener. The allegory did not go unearthed by academics in the field. Whereas Rousseau made direct reference to the metaphor, declaring in *Émile* that “plants are improved by cultivation, and men by education”, Jauffret nevertheless lamented that “observers spy, during many years and await, with untiring patience, the blooming of a plant [yet] one does not yet see an attentive and truly philosophical gaze turned to a child’s cradle”, though perhaps the latter’s

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<sup>283</sup> John Carlin, “From Wonder to Blunder: The Child is Mother to the Man”, in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 242.

<sup>284</sup> Leroy, *Médecine Maternelle*, xxii.

grief was more in response to the lack of genuine care, attention, and patience bestowed by the former upon his proverbial plant.<sup>285 286</sup>

Indeed, for this particular cultivation is one liable to the most extreme of modification, ultimately stunting the plant in its capacity to grow, blossom, and bloom in its natural direction: “it will take generations to weed out the bad training and cultivate new relations to children that encourage them to embrace their possibilities rather than solidify an oppressed identity.”<sup>287</sup> Once again Rousseau’s legacy is one riddled with irony, for when triumphant in chastising on some trivial issue he proclaimed “your little meddler spoils everything he touches!” it becomes almost satirical.<sup>288</sup> And so in much the same way that many aspects of Enlightenment thought eventually sowed the seeds of their own destruction by insisting upon an incessant process of doubt that would in time be invited upon itself, Rousseau’s endeavours were a practice in self-destruction. His particular role in the *Siècle des Lumières* was in bringing childhood out of the murky existence it had endured throughout the aptly named Dark Ages, to proceed to *enlighten* the child and in turn be *enlightened* by the Romantic-inspired experience of returning to one’s natural roots and beginnings.

However, the self-led determination to succeed in such a feat ultimately resulted in blind pursuit, in the forcing of circumstances and manipulation of evidence facilitated by a metaphorical bleaching of the shadows of history, memory, experience, and personhood to make way for the stains of a new truth. Not only did this produce a tangle of contradictory doctrine in itself, but also a blazing legacy of

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<sup>285</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 12.

<sup>286</sup> Louis-Francois Jauffret, “Prix proposé par la Société des Observateurs de l’homme, pour l’an 11”, *Magasin encyclopédique* (7th year), Vol. 4, No. 16 (1801-1802), 541.

<sup>287</sup> Scholz, “All Children”, 410.

<sup>288</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 66.

pedagogic attitudes and discourses on children and childhood which has become lost and confused, *blind* to the shadowy truth which existed before, and *blinded* by the dazzling brilliance by which they had been *enlightened*: “deluded by a beautiful dream, and in pursuit of a shadow, [they] strive after immortality and fall into oblivion.”<sup>289</sup>

As with all prominent movements or figures in literature and the arts, the inclination for opposition is strong, and always seeks prominent manifestation. This becomes additionally complex in the case of Rousseau, unsurprisingly, not only as a result of his profoundly paradoxical and self-contradictory discourse, but from a historian’s point of view, the unique durability of Rousseau’s influence often rendered his critics somewhat buried beneath the swathes of supporters. With Rousseau’s theory encompassing aspects of both Enlightenment and Romantic theory, the latter already largely a reaction to the former, it would take a significant shift in order to bring about a movement or style sufficient to undermine both. Aside from its ripple effect across Europe, France’s 1848 Revolution bore a variety of cultural outcomes, one of which was realism, whose literary and artistic output was to dominate and inspire for decades to come.

If Realism is to be understood, as it often is, as a reaction against Romanticism, it can be equally considered “a direct outgrowth of it”, and by extension from the Enlightenment as well, distilling from the former’s fancy, convoluted over time, and the latter’s dogmatic empiricism, engrained and hardened, the remnants of genuine reality and intrinsic truth to which both originally claimed

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<sup>289</sup> Benzaquén, “Childhood”, 50.

to pertain.<sup>290</sup> The overwhelming sense of nostalgia which seemed to emerge in tandem with the acknowledgement of children and their childhood state in earnest, and which continued thereafter to hold sway and influence over a number of artistic and literary endeavours, did not disappear with the realists. Although ostensibly it may have seemed too sentimental, too airy-fairy a consideration for a movement concerned with depicting ordinary, typical, contemporary life as it truly was, without artifice, drama, or censorship, nostalgia, or “that *Heimweh* which for the European Romantics became a central trope for both individual and national self-expression and identity”, it was similarly absorbed by the realists, whose sense of nostalgia lay in their yearning for a relinquishment of fantasy and a reclaiming of unembellished reality.<sup>291</sup>

In France, the artistic strand of Realism was led by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), who became known for his depiction of decidedly ordinary scenes of contemporary life, and in particular those of workers or peasants, endeavouring to be the first to depict “so complete an expression of poverty” when he produced his famous work *Les Casseurs de pierres* (*The Stone Breakers*) between 1849 and 1850.<sup>292</sup> In producing such work, perceived as a deliberate pursuit of ugliness, Courbet was labelled by critics as both a “terrible socialist” and a “savage”, an interesting reminder of the longstanding connection established between the natural and unremarkable and that of the ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ world.<sup>293</sup> In addition, his

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<sup>290</sup> George R. Havens, “Romanticism in France”, *PMLA*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (1940), 19.

<sup>291</sup> Walder, “Remembering Rousseau”, 424.

<sup>292</sup> Gustave Courbet quoted in Fabrice Masanès, *Gustave Courbet* (Cologne: Taschen, 2006), 31.

<sup>293</sup> Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, *Courbet Reconsidered* (New York: Brooklyn Museum Press, 1988), 4-6.

outspokenness and insistence upon one's own experience existing as the only proper and genuine source for real art invited accusations of unbridled vanity.<sup>294</sup>

Save for a select few prominent supporters from the avant-garde, Courbet, like many artists, did not receive notable appreciation until after his death. It was not until well into the twentieth century that Courbet's emphasis on material reality was recognised as not only capable of enriching his often lowly subjects with a sort of quality and dignity from which they were previously exempt, but also highly influential in the development of Cubist styles and techniques: "Courbet, whilst still using paint on canvas, wanted to move beyond [pictorial] conventions and find the equivalent of the physical sensation of the material objects portrayed: their weight, their temperature, their texture. What perspective towards the horizon meant to Poussin, *the force of gravity* meant to Courbet."<sup>295</sup> Similarly controversial was Courbet's irrespective use of typically very large canvases, breaking with the tradition that saw epic proportions reserved for biblical or historical subjects by affording the same prestige to his decidedly ordinary subjects.

Courbet's favour for the everyday and unremarkable diminished somewhat when he produced his 1855 masterpiece *L'Atelier du peintre: Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique et morale* (*The Painter's Studio: A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*) (fig. 2.1).<sup>296</sup> Standing at over three and a half metres in height and almost six metres wide, this 'real allegory', an oxymoronic term perhaps indicative of the artist's relationship with art and indeed the paradox of the piece, "represents society at its

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<sup>294</sup> Faunce and Nochlin, *Courbet Reconsidered*, 7-9.

<sup>295</sup> John Berger, *The Success and Failure of Picasso* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1965), 52-53.

<sup>296</sup> *L'Atelier du peintre: Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique et morale* (*The Painter's Studio: A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*) will hereafter be referred to as *Studio*.

best, its worst, and its average”, depicting Courbet’s real-life experiences and figures of influence through the medium of allegory.<sup>297</sup> The left side of the painting, a summary of life under the Establishment, is in Courbet’s own words, illustrative of “the other world of trivial life, the people, misery, poverty, wealth, the exploited and the exploiters, the people who live off death”; the centre features Courbet himself watched by a young boy as he paints a landscape of the Loue River valley (a tribute to his homeland of Ornans), his back turned to the female nude beside him, symbolic of Academic art; and on the right is a gathering of Courbet’s friends and supporters, including Baudelaire, Champfleury, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and his chief patron, Alfred Bruyas, under whose feet can be seen a small boy drawing on a sheet of parchment.<sup>298</sup>

The painting is littered with symbols and allegorical metaphors, and would have perhaps been more so had Courbet completed the painting in time for its intended exhibition, instead forced to leave the majority of the background unfinished. Some prominent and common interpretations include: both the cluster of items at the hunter’s foot on the left, consisting of a guitar, a dagger, a plumed hat and a buckled shoe, and the Christ-like crucified figure towards the background as symbolic of the death of Romanticism; the skull which rests atop the copy of the *Journal des Débats* as representing the death of Academic art as well as that of free-speech under Napoleon’s laws on censorship; and Courbet’s *mise en abîme* painting of the Doubs department of France as an act of defiant provincialism in the face of Parisian-centricity.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Benedict Nicolson, *Courbet: The Studio of the Painter* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 60.

<sup>298</sup> Gustave Courbet in a letter to Champfleury quoted in Masanès, *Gustave Courbet*, 48.

<sup>299</sup> Nicolson, *Courbet*, 20-33.

Most significant to this thesis, however, is the oft unnoticed image of the small boy drawing on the right of the canvas and that of the young child in the centre who observes the artist, considering what they inform us of Courbet's own view of children, childhood, and their relationship with creativity. *Studio* has not escaped 'Rousseauian' reading from scholars; his inclusion of the landscape at the very centre of the canvas, engaging "the *curiosité* of the *savant*" child, surrounded by tropes of contemporary, urban life, offers not only a "stark contrast between the harsh realities of civil society and unsullied nature" but also presents the latter as the environment of the inquisitive and "so-called 'innocent child.'"<sup>300 301</sup>

Not unaligned with Rousseau's reference to "the abyss of the human species", Courbet's own method and mantra has been considered in tessellation with Rousseau's, in view of their apparent shared emphasis on the value of drawing from direct, personal experience in nature.<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, it has been posited, in Daniel Guernsey's chapter dedicated to analysing parities between *Studio* and *Émile*, that "the boy drawing on the floor near Champfleury's feet can be viewed as the practical result of the theoretical ferment taking place in the centre of the painting; properly reared in 'Rousseauian' education, the boy is independent, freed from the confining lessons of state institutions as he intently works on his drawing. Self-absorbed and autonomous, he is, nevertheless, still a part of the civil world of adults who stand nearby."<sup>303</sup>

Pertinent though this is, Courbet's *Studio* seems to go much further than merely regurgitate Rousseau's credo, not least in its portrayal of the child. During

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<sup>300</sup> House, "Curiosité", 41.

<sup>301</sup> Guernsey, "Aesthetic education", 71-72.

<sup>302</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau quoted in Guernsey, "Aesthetic education", 77.

<sup>303</sup> Guernsey, "Aesthetic education", 80.



the Enlightenment and Romantic eras childhood began to be discovered as something of a cache of wisdom, insight, and sensitivity, a concept which inspired much of the retrospective study in the twentieth century of early sensory encounters, often with nature, as pivotal in the development of a creative or artistic mind: “a rather hazy impression [...] lying in a pram, in the shadow of a tree [...] I see the sun glittering through the leaves and blossoms of the bushes [...] everything is wholly wonderful, colourful, and splendid.”<sup>304</sup> This association of childhood intuitiveness with a sort of “creative vitality” was gradual, and began in earnest early in the nineteenth century, when the innovative potential of the child emerged, unbound by habit or regulation, as an influence upon avant-garde endeavours.<sup>305</sup>

In light of this, we may consider the small boy scribbling away in Courbet’s *Studio*, half submerged in shadow, emerging from the darkness around him, as symbolic of the capacity of the ‘wise child’, unencumbered by instruction or influence, to draw us out, in both senses, from the dark opacity of art defined by Academic rigour, and genuinely *enlighten* us with the clarity of his unfettered, inner vision: “the boy drawing is the naïve, preconscious anticipation of creative activity; he represents the appropriation of the world in unbroken originality.”<sup>306</sup> Arguably a criticism of any form of “education [as] the intervention of adults in the lives of children”, Rousseau’s included, Courbet sought in this painting to reveal the capacity of the child to create before the intrusion of adult influence, symbolised perhaps by the dwarfing of the child by the engulfment of dark adulthood, lamenting

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<sup>304</sup> Jung, *Memories*, 21.

<sup>305</sup> Marcel Franciscono, “Paul Klee and Children’s Art”, in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 96.

<sup>306</sup> Jonathan Fineberg, “Foreword”, in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 8.

that as soon as they are initiated into the system of ‘knowledge’ and ‘culture’, “most children abandon artistic anarchy and idiosyncrasy to join the utilitarian herd”, as Friedrich Nietzsche later defined it.<sup>307 308</sup>

Considered reflective of free-drawing, a deeply liberating approach to artistic creation related to free-writing or even asemic writing, buttressed by the interchangeable use of the French term *écriture* for writing, handwriting, and the artist’s brushstrokes, Courbet’s child is demonstrative of the possibilities when one truly submits oneself to the impulses and direction of *nature* as opposed to the societal influences around him.<sup>309</sup> His obscurity beneath a trample of avant-garde feet symbolises the ongoing ignorance show towards the child, as his steadfast overshadowing by the adult crowd, irrespective to a certain extent of political or social standpoints. Determinedly rising however from his shadowy enclave of adult inception, the child nevertheless produces direct originality, simultaneously succeeding in embodying what Meyer Schapiro called “the source of creativity, unobscured by convention”, and dismantling Rousseau’s persistent erroneousness in attributing childhood creativity as a symptom of the desire to assimilate: “all children, being natural imitators, try to draw.”<sup>310 311</sup>

Resurfacing at the turn of the twentieth century, this sentiment pervaded modernist discourse concerned with the relationship between child art and ‘primitivism’, as Chapter One explored, not least in the work of Roger Fry, resolute in the significance of childhood potential for artistic creation and the importance of

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<sup>307</sup> Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle* (Vol. 4: *Discours sur la nature des Animaux, Les Animaux domestiques* (Paris, 1753), 70-71.

<sup>308</sup> Shiff, “Primitivist Phylogeny”, 180.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>310</sup> Meyer Schapiro, “Courbet and Popular Imagery: An Essay on Realism and Naiveté”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 4, No.3/4 (1941), 164.

<sup>311</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Worthington, 103.

not stifling it: “[such is] the nature of the artistic impulse and the possibilities of its cultivation or inhibition [...] ordinary teaching destroyed completely the children’s peculiar gifts of representation and design, replacing them with feeble imitations of some contemporary convention [and so] untaught children have an enormous superiority [due to] the directness and unconsciousness with which he expresses his emotion.”<sup>312</sup> Courbet’s spearheading of this manifested itself in the formal characteristics of his work as much as in the subject matter. From the childishness associated with the apparent frozenness of his figures, to Schapiro’s recognising of simplified forms and arrangements as well as influences drawn from the life and art of folk culture, “Courbet’s picture is a paradigm of the art of unlearning [...] neglect[ing] legibility and its spatial order principle [of] central perspective” to present an artwork which attempts to embody as much as allegorise his views.<sup>313 314</sup>

There is something to be said, therefore, for the significance and ongoing relationship between art and children. The constant re-emergence of the image of “the child-messiah [who] belongs to the hopes of rejuvenation” alongside the concept of “art as society’s salvation” galvanises a pre-existing connection between the two which strengthens the potential of art as a creative outpouring born of the insightfulness of childhood, boasting the capacity to enlighten, inspire, and educate without the imbuing of design, motive, or influence that experience and age carries.<sup>315 316</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Roger Fry, “Children’s Drawings”, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 30, No. 171 (1917), 225-226.

<sup>313</sup> Meyer Schapiro, “Popular Imagery”, 166, 171.

<sup>314</sup> Fineberg, “Foreword”, 9.

<sup>315</sup> Hoffman, “Art of Unlearning”, 3.

<sup>316</sup> Richard Shiff, “To Move the Eyes: Impressionism, Symbolism and Well-Being, c.1891”, in *Impressions of French Modernity: Art and Literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 204.

The topic is not without debate and confusion, not least with regards to terminology – “*Naïveté*, as characterised in 1846, is primarily about the artist’s self-expression, about his capacity to peel off the layers of academic learning and cultural conditioning, in order to realise his own *tempérament* as fully as possible; Baudelaire associates naïveté with Romanticism. *Curiosité*, by contrast, is about a mode of engagement with the external world, and its corollary is not Romanticism but *modernité*” – but is united by the central figure of the child, from whom the consolidating ideas and images originally sprout.<sup>317</sup> Lovejoy’s statement that “this best condition of mankind was not primitive and was not, properly speaking, ‘of nature’ but was the product of art” offers some indication of the extent to which grappling with theory, treatise, terminology, and the ownership thereof, by Rousseau as well as others, had a propensity to *overshadow* the real essence of the matter.<sup>318</sup>

With regards to the position of the child in this, Peter Coveney summarised the situation well when he declared “the child so congenial an image, either of growth or regression, of potency or regret”, such is the danger negotiated by those scholars who endeavour, often in a nostalgic effort to reimagine their own beginnings, to box off in an orderly and pleasant way that which is by its very *nature* sometimes disorderly and unpleasant.<sup>319</sup> Indeed they too proceed, in the hurried and eager process of what claims to be an enlightenment of the dark ages of our mind, to arbitrarily bleach away any remnants of memory or personhood, without leaving as much as a shadow of what once existed, ignorant of its significance and truth, albeit sometimes complex and difficult, in order to make way

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<sup>317</sup> House, “*Curiosité*”, 34.

<sup>318</sup> Lovejoy, “*Supposed Primitivism*”, 180.

<sup>319</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 35.

for the staining of new, carefully considered opinions and identities. Art theorist Ellen Handler Spitz perhaps encapsulated the fallout thereof for the child (and indeed for art) for many years to come, as the following chapters will explore, most effectively when she explained that “By limiting ourselves to what [we think] a child obviously needs [...], we risk our child’s growing less sensitive to ambient colours and sounds, to lights and shadows, to all the imaginative play and fantastic possibilities these phenomena awaken.”<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *The Brightening Glance: Imagination and Childhood* (New York: Random House, 2007), 13-14.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Negotiating the Dark Underbelly: Fear and Destitution in the Shadows*

“I have begun to see a light cloudiness in front of my eyes.”  
Edgar Degas<sup>321</sup>

“Piles of shadows covered the horizon. A strange shade, gradually drawing nearer,  
extended little by little over men, over things, over ideas; a shade which came from  
wraths and systems.”  
Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*<sup>322</sup>

Shadows, light, darkness, and the interplay thereof, permeated the lives and works of both Victor Hugo and Edgar Degas. Like a thick, soaking coat of the black ink which formed the words of their literature and the images of their artwork, shadows and their resulting darkness blanketed the vision of these two figures, imbuing it with an opaque solemnity. In 1906, finally resigned to his failing eyesight putting a devastating end to his artistic career and practice, Degas wistfully and sombrely declared, “If I could live my life again, I should do nothing but black and white.”<sup>323</sup> Following years of personal loss, finally succumbing to pneumonia in 1885, Hugo’s final words upon his deathbed were reported to be “Je vois une lumière noire” (“I see a black light”).<sup>324</sup>

In many ways, the pervasiveness of shadow for Hugo and Degas, both on personal and professional levels, is testament to its prevalence symbolically in the

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<sup>321</sup> Edgar Degas quoted in Jeanne Fevre, *Mon oncle Degas: souvenirs et document inédits* (Geneva : P. Cailler, 1949), 138.

<sup>322</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Isabel F. Hapgood, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co, 1987), Project Gutenberg EBook, Vol. 4, Book 1, Ch. 4.

<sup>323</sup> Douglas Crimp, “Positive/Negative: A Note on Degas’s Photographs”, *October*, Vol. 5 (1978), 100.

<sup>324</sup> John Andrew Frey, *A Victor Hugo Encyclopaedia*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), xxi. Translation: “I see a black light”.

nineteenth-century French urban society they so frequently depicted. It was, on the one hand, a world of great contrasts, of black and white, but also with a dogged propensity for a muddying thereof. This era was one of such social polarities, largely defined by “a society which devoted so much energy to the creation of wealth, and was so especially blind to the privations of the poor.”<sup>325</sup> This blindness, this unrelenting shroud of darkness, was of course not an affliction suffered by those to whom it belonged, but rather, for those it wilfully hid.

In exploration of this particular theme, this chapter begins by briefly looking to examples of prominent political artworks of the French nineteenth century, considering their messages within the context of the political and social upheaval which characterised French life at this time and gave rise to the establishment of an early welfare state. The bulk of the chapter is then dedicated to two ongoing case studies surrounding the works of Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and Edgar Degas (1834-1917), focusing upon their symbolic employment of chiaroscuro, and crucially the metaphorical significance of the grey shadows in between, as a means of highlighting the polarities of society, and most specifically, the plight and very dark experiences of the poor or working-class child and their ‘shadowland’ existence, analysing the various manifestations by which this contributed to a debasing ‘otherisation’ of society’s most vulnerable.

The prevalence of black and white as a descriptive, literary and symbolic format is prominently evidenced in the satirical cartoons which littered the press in the long-nineteenth century. Of particular renown in this period was Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), whose caricatures provided a scathing visual commentary on

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<sup>325</sup> Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 119.

social and political life, and often appeared in Charles Philipon's comic journal *La Caricature* (1830-1843), which sought to launch a pictorial attack on the corruption of the ruling classes. Famous amongst his countless pen and ink "vignettes of city life" was his lithograph *Gargantua* (fig. 3.1), which, upon release in 1831, not only earned him a six-month stretch in Sainte-Pélagie prison, but also proved a significant factor in the bringing about of censorship of the French press in the early 1830s.<sup>326</sup> <sup>327</sup> "For you humanity was definable/broadly by its weaknesses" – this poetic addressing of the artist by Richard Howard points to the blunt negativity by which Daumier's artwork was typically shaped.<sup>328</sup> It is interesting to note that following a professional prolificacy which focused upon the social polarities of the years following the July Monarchy (beginning in 1830), his metaphorical sombre vision was eventually overtaken by near blindness by 1873, forever enshrouding his world in the darkness of which his pen so wittily and cuttingly reported.

His 1831 print *Gargantua* (fig. 3.1) features King Louis-Philippe, leader of the Orleanist party, depicted, as the title suggests, as the giant Gargantua, a character from Renaissance writer François Rabelais' grotesque pentology of novels *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1532-35). Instead of upon a throne of gold, the vulgarly enormous king sits on a large 'chaise percée' (a commode or toilet), exemplifying the prevalence of scatological humour in Rabelais' work. Via an enormous plank extending, like a tongue, from the king's mouth to the dirt below him, his government ministers dutifully wheel baskets filled with money taken from the poor up to the king's gaping, greedy mouth, into which they deposit the funds and indeed

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<sup>326</sup> Raymond Grew, "Picturing the People: Images of the Lower Orders in Nineteenth Century French Art", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Summer (1996), 218.

<sup>327</sup> Carrol F. Coates, "Daumier and Flaubert: Examples of Graphic and Literary Caricature", *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1976), 304.

<sup>328</sup> Richard Howard, "Honoré Daumier", *Ploughshares*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1979), 43.



themselves, with other ministers gathering to collect any stray coins which fall, as well as those who congregate beneath the commode to receive the decorative crosses and rewards being excreted towards them by the monarch. Whilst on the one hand, this image seems to project a very specific political message designed to engage with a mature audience, it also makes many symbolic connections with the decidedly puerile aspects of the world of children.

Drawing from Mikhail Bakhtin's extensive work on Rabelais' presentation of a "topsy-turvy world", we can understand Daumier's depiction of the Gargantuan king as a giant, greedy, and presumably clueless baby: a "significant inversion occurs in the body of the king, which Daumier has conspicuously infantilised by showing him being fed by others. His insatiable appetites and perpetual bowel movements have rendered him passive and sedentary".<sup>329 330</sup> Far from the knowledgeable and regal head of state, the king is positioned on what could be understood as a high chair and potty combined, and opening his enormous, expectant mouth, he waits, just like a child, for those who tend to him to both feed him and deal with his faecal deposits. Being that "the image of food is often a symbol for the entire labour process" the body of this gigantic, grotesque child-king "transgresses its own limits", gorging and growing only at the expense of the world, thereby representing the financial and political gluttony of the establishment.<sup>331 332</sup>

Furthermore, Daumier's composition of the scene works to enhance the polarity between the gluttonous child-king and the various 'serveurs' at his feet. Not

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<sup>329</sup> Thomas J. Farrell, *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 23.

<sup>330</sup> Elizabeth C. Childs, "Big Trouble: Daumier, Gargantua., and the Censorship of Political Caricature", *Art Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1992): 28.

<sup>331</sup> Childs, "Big Trouble", 28.

<sup>332</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 26.

only does Daumier's version of Gargantua reject the typical image of the luxuriously laden feasting table in favour of a lofty ramp that emphasises the direct contraposition between "powerless and powerful, between the feeders and the fed", but the sheer enormity and supremacy of Daumier's glutton is accentuated by the "perspectival divide of a diagonal plank, which links the giant dominating middle ground with the pathetic crowd pressed into the right foreground [where] cripples, emaciated mothers, and tattered workers gather".<sup>333 334</sup>

In this way, Daumier makes an important connection between the child and the plight of the poor. This can be buttressed further by considering Freud's theory of anal erotism, in which a child's preoccupation with faeces leads to greed in adulthood: "according to Freud, a child's sense of power and independence derives in part from his or her manipulation of excrement; as she or he matures, this early anal erotism is repressed and sublimated in a reattachment to another symbol of power, money".<sup>335</sup> By depicting this state figurehead thus, Daumier is exposing the immaturity, inadequacy, metaphoric greed and sense of self-elevation of those in power. Consider the inclusion of a tiny baby in the arms of his poverty-stricken mother in the bottom right of the print. "Vulnerable to the long littleness of life", this poor child is scorned and exploited for circumstances beyond his control by a force whose fancy for self-indulgence and greed is perhaps the root of the negativity which surrounds the image of the child.<sup>336</sup>

The enduring significance of the emaciated baby is reflected in Camille Pissarro's (1830-1903) drawing *Capital* (1899) (fig. 3.2), which formed part of an

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<sup>333</sup> Childs, "Big Trouble", 28.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>336</sup> Howard, "Honoré Daumier", 43.

album of some twenty-eight similar drawings of modern social injustices, each accompanied by socialist or anarchist excerpts, called *Turpitudes Sociales* (*Social Scandals*), which the artist sent to his nieces in order to educate them on the evils of capitalist society.<sup>337</sup> *Capital* particularly focuses on capitalist greed, depicting a rotund man, a sort of caricature of a Jewish banker, clutching a bag of money atop a plinth in the centre of Paris, on which usually a civic sculpture might be placed in order to allegorise key values of the period (such as Marianne of the République), and is surrounded by an agglomerated mass of hundreds of poor people begging beneath him.

As with Daumier's *Gargantua*, Pissarro's drawing features a mother with a baby in the bottom right corner of the frame; this time, the baby is held aloft by its mother, presenting it desperately towards the capitalist 'fat cat' at the centre. The baby is barely discernible as such; almost a corpse, its bony body gives rise to a head that protrudes as little more than a skull, with a pained facial expression suggestive of impending death. Ironically, whilst "the crowd was among the strongest of cultural signs [and] distrust of crowds was an important theme of French nineteenth-century thought" due to its perceived connection with the threat of a rise in working-class consciousness and anarchism, it is rather the selfish greed of modern society represented by the single, fat individual who is the most significant threat, for his wealth comes at the expense of even the weakest of society's members; the poverty-stricken child.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> "Pissarro's People", *The Clark*, June 12–October 2 2011, <http://www.clarkart.edu/exhibitions/pissarro/content/slideshow-turpitudes-sociales.cfm> (accessed 9th April 2016). Pissarro worked closely with Seurat and Signac in later life, who, as discussed earlier on, also produced art that reflected their strong political beliefs in its criticism of the capitalist establishment.

<sup>338</sup> Grew, "Picturing the People", 222.

Ostensibly, the French long-nineteenth century has been historically and politically characterised as rather radical, with its latter decades awash with legislative reform supposedly geared towards social and moral realignment. The turbulence of these years, built upon foundations of “military defeat, revolution, further military defeats, civil war and a humiliating peace treaty”, is evident in the tumbling flux of political turnover crammed into what is a comparatively short amount of time, comprising some eight changes in power and leadership from the French Revolution in 1789 through to the end of the Belle Époque in 1914.<sup>339</sup> Accordingly, various French governments and leaders, especially in the latter half of the century, viewed moral reform as what historian Sylvia Schafer terms “the antidote to the panoply of national travails”.<sup>340</sup> France and its people had become debilitated by the military difficulties, political upheavals and social distress that had characterised its recent history, blighted by the commonly recognised “symptoms of [this] demoralisation, includ[ing] radicalism, alcoholism, military weakness, and the statistical appearance of a frighteningly low birth-rate.”<sup>341</sup>

By way of a response to this, the state turned to a somewhat drastic system of social and moral reform, which began to take effect in earnest during the Third Republic, in order to combat what was perceived as the very real “threat of ‘depopulation’ and [...] ‘degeneration of the race’”.<sup>342</sup> It is in this way that France triggered the origin of the concept of the welfare state. Like the contrast of black and white, light and dark, France was as much responsible for enlightening modern

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<sup>339</sup> William Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

<sup>340</sup> Sylvia Schafer, *Children in Moral Danger and the Problem of Government in Third Republic France*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>342</sup> Colin Heywood, *Growing Up in France: From the Ancien Régime to the Third Republic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

reform as it was riddled with murky streams of seemingly archaic woes: “Not only were pauperism, prisons, crime, illegitimacy, and illiteracy recognised as critical problems for modern France, but contemporary French history was also believed to have played a peculiarly exemplary role in the course of modern civilisation.”<sup>343</sup>

This pattern of light and dark appears as a sort of symbolic thread which runs through the legislative reform of the nineteenth century, which essentially sought to combat France’s chief social issue: its demographic crisis. This manifested itself twofold. First, it was characterised by something of a moral sully of the population as a result of a low birth-rate and increasing levels of prostitution, as well as racial tension following an influx of immigration arising from hurried “French colonial expansion between 1880 and 1914” contributing to a sort of perceived physical demographic ‘darkening’.<sup>344 345</sup> Second, a rather foreboding black cloud of child poverty which hung over nineteenth-century France exacerbated fears about the nation’s future, for not only did “children [...] make up over half of those living in primary poverty”, but infant mortality rates disturbingly rose in the years between 1850 and 1880.<sup>346 347</sup>

To begin with, efforts to counter these issues came in the form of educational reform and child protection laws. Being that it was not until 1841 that France’s first child labour law was passed, it was clear by the latter half the century that further legislation was necessary, most prominently taking the form of three child protection laws in 1874, and a further measure in 1889 specifically designed to combat abusive

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<sup>343</sup> Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 53.

<sup>344</sup> In Paris, 155,000 prostitutes were registered and a further 725,000 arrested on suspicion between 1871 and 1903 (T. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 308).

<sup>345</sup> Fortescue, *Third Republic*, 39.

<sup>346</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006), 187.

<sup>347</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 177.

adults.<sup>348 349</sup> In the realm of education, the early 1880s saw Jules Ferry's reforms essentially secularise schools, thereby opening learning to the masses, as well as the opening of the revealingly-named "ragged schools" providing educational opportunities to poorer children.<sup>350 351</sup>

The establishment of 'ragged schools' in part points to an important preoccupation which prevailed across much governmental legislation in this epoch; the notion of the risk of immorality and deviance associated with the poor spreading like a disease throughout the population. Whilst state-implemented reform was likely to affect those positioned on all rungs of the social ladder, it was nevertheless the working class, and especially its youth, whose lifestyle, morals and general condition proved the focus. The tendency to locate a nation's problems in the circumstances and activities of the poor was not unusual, but the public hysteria spawned by France's demographic catastrophe coupled with Schafer's attestation that "the lives and morals of the urban poor and labouring classes increasingly preoccupied middle-class philanthropists, hygienists, and social critics" delivered a new and desperate kind of urgency in answering this particularly troublesome social question.<sup>352 353</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> The three 1874 laws aimed to regulate child labour in industry, provide protection for children working as travelling performers or beggars, and the Roussel Law to protect children placed in the care of wet nurses. Linda L. Clark, "Review of Sylvia Schafer's *Children in Moral Danger and the Problem of Government in Third Republic France*", *The American History Review*, Vol 104, No. 10 (1999), 252.

<sup>349</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 286.

<sup>350</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 163.

<sup>351</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 163. Ragged schools were introduced in Western Europe from around 1840 onwards and offered free education and services (often including accommodation, food and clothing) to society's very poorest children.

<sup>352</sup> From peasants often being blamed for the Bubonic Plague in Europe in the Late Middle Ages (c. 1340-1400) due to the perceived immorality and uncleanness of their lives, to Third World countries today being chastised for desperately making use of fossil fuels for energy as opposed to expensive, more environmentally-friendly alternatives, those less fortunate have often felt the brunt of the blame for society's problems.

It was perhaps the Paris Commune, whose reputation for radical socialism and association with violent massacres far outlived its stint in government, which triggered a resolve amongst the ruling classes that their authority was never quite so much in doubt and that action needed to be taken in order to preserve a France of both international and moral standing.<sup>354</sup> Symbolic of a black mark in France's history, whose memory threatened to splurge across the bright white pages of the nation's unwritten future like an inerasable ink-stain, the Commune and its effects lingered like a dark cloud over the lofty heads of French Republicans. For many, the association of the Commune with the grubby agglomeration of the poor was derived in no small part from the breakdown of traditional family values over the preceding century, during which a lack of orderly community had given rise to both the exacerbation of the perceived natural cohesiveness of the unwashed, as well as the formation of ill-found togetherness of anarchy and anti-establishment discord.

In much the same way that "they assumed that one childhood was much like another", the state deemed one poor person as identical to the next, and in turn, the entire working class population as a collective and unruly child in need of cleansing and guidance.<sup>355</sup> In line with Roger Fry's concept of "primitives, who are the 'children' of social evolution", the poor child, much like the apparently 'dark' and 'unclean' native of a non-Western community, needed to be 'civilised', its shadowy, dusty film of poverty and sin scrubbed away in order to reveal a shining beacon of

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<sup>353</sup> Sylvia Schafer, "When the Child is the Father of the Man: Work, Sexual Difference and the Guardian State in Third Republic France", *History and Theory*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1992): 105.

<sup>354</sup> The Paris Commune was a radical socialist government that ruled Paris from 18<sup>th</sup> March to 28<sup>th</sup> May 1871, whose support primarily lay in the downtrodden working class and immigrant population of the capital. It was eventually quashed by the regular French army after a series of bloody battles and massacres.

<sup>355</sup> Philip Stewart, "The Child Comes of Age" quoted in Heywood, *Growing Up*, 1.

hope for the state-prescribed future.<sup>356</sup> With this in mind, coupled with the focus on eradicating any risk of repeating the mistakes of yesteryear, all heads were thus turned towards the future, and consequently, towards the child, resulting in the implementation of what became known as a ‘paternalist’ state from the 1870s onwards. As it was now recognised to be in the interests of a country that its children develop into healthy, productive and capable adults, child welfare became the principal focus, for it seemed that more than ever before “the future of both society and nation hung in delicate balance with the fate of each and every French child”.<sup>357</sup>

Accordingly, Schafer attributes the forthright implementation of the new notion of ‘paternalism’ as a response to these mounting concerns, the government inaugurating itself as a sort of alternative mother or father, a supplementary parent for all in order to validate the “assertion that the state might have a legitimate role in the drama of family life”.<sup>358</sup> Authoritative involvement in the collective upbringing of a nation’s offspring was not foreign to the French; Henri Duval published a popular manual on child-rearing in 1840, for example.<sup>359</sup> However, efforts were significantly escalated in later decades. Gripped with the fear that, should the ill-advised practices of immoral parents go unchecked, their children would likely become afflicted with the same deficiency of moral decency, in turn threatening the future of France as an entirety, the Republic sought to enforce “the gradual

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<sup>356</sup> Roger Fry, “Children’s Drawings” quoted in Richard Shiff, “Roger Fry and Children’s Drawings” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 160.

<sup>357</sup> Schafer, “Father of the Man”, 99.

<sup>358</sup> Schafer, *Moral Danger*, 43.

<sup>359</sup> Henri Duval, *Manuel de l’enfance, ou Petit cours d’éducation physique et morale, suivi d’une nouvelle méthode de lecture* (Paris : Johanneau, 1840).



relocation of parenthood away from the realm of naturalised right and toward the realm of social responsibility”.<sup>360</sup>

Most prominently, and in-keeping with the notion of preventing the epidemic spread of the disease of poverty and its related ills, paternalism took the form of the gradual establishment of the *Service des Enfants Moralement Abandonnés* in the 1870s, and the subsequent and related *loi sur la déchéance de la puissance paternelle* of 24<sup>th</sup> July 1889.<sup>361</sup> The concept of ‘moral abandon’ was concerned, in line with fears regarding the contagiousness of the shadow of poverty, with “suspicions of moral deviance which, in the last instance, conflated the working-class family with every family, and every family with a paradigmatic French family whose future appeared to be entwined with the future of the nation.”<sup>362</sup>

The *loi sur la déchéance de la puissance paternelle* dictated that “parents would automatically lose their rights if convicted for prostituting their own children or, more generally, for crimes committed against ‘the person or persons of their children.’”<sup>363</sup> The severity of such a law was plainly apparent to a nation used to familial autonomy, and was accordingly critiqued just a few years later as arguably more disruptive and divisive than it was unifying and settling: “to tamper with *la puissance paternelle* was to demolish by its very foundation the oldest, the most venerable, and the most sacred institution of the civilised world; it was to throw families into disorder, and to cast confusions and chaos everywhere.”<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Schafer, *Moral Danger*, 25.

<sup>361</sup> “Service des Enfants Moralement Abandonnés” translates from the French to mean “Service for Morally Abandoned Children”, and “loi sur la déchéance de la puissance paternelle” translates to mean “law on the forfeiture of parental power”.

<sup>362</sup> Schafer, *Moral Danger*, 18.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>364</sup> V. Radenac, *Du rôle de l'Etat dans la protection des enfants maltraités ou moralement abandonnés: Commentaire de la loi du 24 juillet 1889 (Tire II)*, (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1901): 24.

Furthermore, and revealing of persisting darker concerns, is the etymological roots of the law's terminology. Whilst the word 'déchéance' literally means 'forfeiture' or 'dispossession', it is derived from the verb 'déchoir', whose various meanings include 'to deprive', 'to wane', and 'to diminish', all of which point as much to the deterioration of morality and indeed morale as they do the relinquishment of automatic parental rights.

And so whilst such laws purported to protect children, for the bettering of the poorer classes and for the good of the country as whole, in reality, they functioned as little more than efficient tools of social and political control. Those of the middle and upper classes viewed demands and unrest amongst the poor as the most significant potential threat to order and therefore sought to simply "ward them off with various endeavours aimed at 'calming the worker's restlessness' and securing social harmony."<sup>365</sup> This perhaps most notably manifested itself in governmental intervention in economic matters aimed at easing unrest. In light of the establishment of the Parti Ouvrier Français and infamous examples of industrial action such as the Anzin coal miners' strike of 1880, the state promoted the construction of railways and other similar infrastructure projects as a means to advertise its willingness to improve employment opportunities for the masses, though of course such commerce did, in the long run, seem to favour the interests of capitalists far more than it did those of normal workers.<sup>366</sup>

A similar approach of appeasement was taken with regards to children, for by the latter decades of the nineteenth century, childhood had become something of

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<sup>365</sup> Charles Sowerwine, "Review of Sanford Elwitt's *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France, 1880-1914*", *Science and Society*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (1988), 351.

<sup>366</sup> Fortescue, *Third Republic*, 41.

“a political stake” by which to garner or forfeit support, especially from an increasingly conscious and militant working class.<sup>367</sup> Viewing concerns regarding education for all children as equivalent to that of employment strife for adult workers, the department for moral abandonment established five schools for its wards between 1882 and 1883.<sup>368</sup> Reputably in line with simmering notions of *tous à l'école* and *une école pour tous*, these schools provided a largely professional education for those in the care of the department, but in many ways solved the issue troubling many officials as to “whether to place the morally abandoned (likely to have bad habits) alongside ‘normal’ and presumably uncorrupted state wards.”<sup>369</sup> In other words, these schools offer another example by which the state endeavoured to separate the poor from the rest of society under the guise of welfare reform.

Perhaps reminiscent to modern readers of the racial segregation suffered by black people in America, for example, born of divisive physiognomic beliefs and discriminatory racial theory developed during and following periods of slavery, or the arbitrary internment camp imprisonment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War, the collation and separation of a given section of society, in this case particularly destitute children, points to a very basic fear on the part of the state of the threat of contamination of the rest of society by the moral, criminal, and indeed biological, deviance of the ‘Other’. Such a comparison, enabled by the temptation in light of their perceived degradation to “equate the child with the savage of ‘primitive races’ [who] grew up ‘like little animals’”, establishes

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<sup>367</sup> Michelle Perrot, “Sur la segregation de l'enfance au XIX siècle”, *La Psychiatrie de l'enfant*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1989): 204.

<sup>368</sup> Schafer, “Father of the Man”, 103.

<sup>369</sup> Clark, “Review”, 252. *Tous à l'école* and *une école pour tous*, translating from French to mean ‘everyone to school’ and ‘a school for everyone’ refers to efforts made around the turn of the century but which came into fruition from about 1930 onwards to enable access to schools for all children by, for example, making secondary schooling free.

something of a “parallelism between the total human conditions of being a savage and those of being a child” alongside that of a sub-human animal, essentially characterised by a patronising and ostracising sense of ‘otherness’ to which they are subject by those of the establishment norm.<sup>370 371</sup>

Fulfilling, in their perceived earthliness, their simplicity, crudeness and lack of civilised logic, of the very definition of ‘primitive’, poor children were seen as belonging to a cultural ‘darkness’, which if not enlightened or cordoned off, could irrevocably stain the purity of the norm. Penned off from the rest like unruly animals, these children of poverty, the most destitute of society, were essentially “the *classes dangereuses* who filled social commentary”, all the more threatening by their youth, an indicator of their generation’s potential as the future of a nation.<sup>372</sup> Accordingly, it was not long before “children from peasant backgrounds were likely to discover the general contempt in which the rest of the population held them”, by which the crushing stigmatisation of poverty and hardship results in a sort of social death which precedes the (usually premature) actual bodily one.<sup>373</sup>

The perception and depiction of the poor, working-class child as an animal in French nineteenth-century society, and in turn the reflection thereof in its artistic and literary creation, can be understood as manifesting itself twofold. On the one hand, this child-animal is a weak little pet in need of shepherding, a sweet and endearing commodity to be trained, admired, and ultimately, exploited under the glaring spotlight of popular public consumption. On the other, these are creatures of a grubby ‘shadowland’ comprising an agglomerated mass of sub-human debasement,

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<sup>370</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 286.

<sup>371</sup> E.H. Erikson, *Childhood And Society*, (New York: Vintage Publishing, 1995), 99.

<sup>372</sup> Grew, “Picturing the People”, 203.

<sup>373</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 261-262.

cowering in the cruel darkness of the underworld to which modern urbanity has confined them. Both halves are, of course, united in the commonality of sorrow and hardship by which their lives are characterised, which in turn accounts in a large part for the public interest in which the story and plight of the poor child was bathed, as Jacques Bonzon remarks: “Happy children have no history [...] but poor children, abandoned children, they do.”<sup>374</sup> It is nevertheless important to acknowledge the two categories and analyse the existence and image of the poor child as such, differentiating between an embodiment of “innocence [as] an eminently exploitable commodity” and “childhood [as] merely the life of a beast.”<sup>375 376</sup>

In many ways, the emergence of the child, commodified or merely destitute, as a mainstay of popular culture in this era, offered a new interest and focus on the lower classes in visual and literary culture. Being that it is in this period that “children [were] continually being commandeered as highly charged and volatile metaphors for any number of tangential causes and interests”, it is no surprise that this was hastily harnessed by the ruling classes, whose fascination with the trope of the innocent and frail child of poverty afforded its status as a principle motif of art and literature.<sup>377</sup> For many, this functioned in a wholly condescending and self-gratifying manner, serving to appease their pride and consolidate their belief in traditional moral and social order, for “pictures of sorrowing children reinforce the defining characteristics of childhood – dependence and powerlessness [...] a desired image in which childhood is no longer a threat and adults are firmly back in control

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<sup>374</sup> Jacques Bonzon, *La Réforme du service des enfants assistés*, (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1901), 3.

<sup>375</sup> Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular imagery*, (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), 12.

<sup>376</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 1.

<sup>377</sup> George Dimock, “Children’s studies and the Romantic Child” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 192.

[...] since childhood itself is defined by weakness and incapacity.”<sup>378</sup> This was not always the case however.

A much-renowned figure who stood at the very centre of the crossroads of popular culture and the suffering child of poverty in nineteenth century France was Victor Hugo, whose work often pivoted around “the theme of the oppressor and the oppressed”.<sup>379</sup> Hugo perhaps most famously and successfully achieved the dissemination of such a refreshing insight in his historical novel *Les Misérables* (1862), which focuses on social and political events in France between 1815 and 1832. For Hugo, “a practitioner of the epic genre, the representation of exceptional achievement or heroic grandeur became increasingly situated either among lowly outcasts or within the collective genius of the people of Paris”, and so his work manifested as an exploration of both the plight and the resilience of the marginalised poor, with a particular focus upon that of the child.<sup>380</sup> In something of a Romantic turn, “Hugo constitue une exception parmi les hommes de sa generation”, as for him, “children [...] became a symbol of all that was good in the world before adult behaviour and institutions made their impact”.<sup>381 382</sup> What is more, the enormity of the suffering of the poverty-stricken child in French society had dwindled by no tangible degree from the beginning to the end of the nineteenth century, and thus its role in popular culture mirrored this, with Hugo himself returning some ten years

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<sup>378</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 143.

<sup>379</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 112.

<sup>380</sup> Edward Ousselin, “Victor Hugo’s European Utopia”, *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2006) 37.

<sup>381</sup> Raymond Trousson, “Victor Hugo juge de Jean-Jacques Rousseau”, *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (1986), 979-980. Translation: “Hugo constitutes an exception amongst the men of his era.”

<sup>382</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 149.

later to one of the novel's principle characters, writing the spin-off *Gavroche: Le Gamin de Paris* (*Gavroche: The Gamin of Paris*) in 1872.

Whilst Hugo's presentation of the child varies, one of the chief devices he employs is that of "the figure of the 'child-redeemer' to radiate goodness and love in a murky adult world" by way of literary and pictorial chiaroscuro, which in some capacity lends itself to the notion of the child as an endearing victim to be commandeered by external forces.<sup>383</sup> Indeed, on the one hand, there is "the prophetic function of Hugo", evidenced by his intentions as a broadcaster of the truth in the face of a cacophony of convenient similitudes, through his projection of such a symbolic role onto the child.<sup>384</sup> However, on the other hand, he nevertheless partook in a practice of "reducing children to something near pathos [and thus] remains part of the adult-child relationship" of control and acquiescence with which we are familiar in this period.<sup>385</sup>

Particularly focusing on the character of Cosette, both her depictions in the literature as well as the complimentary artwork of Émile Bayard (1837-1891), we can find evidence of Hugo's portrayal of children as possessive of a uniquely angelic quality.<sup>386</sup> The warming glow to be found at the heart of the child becomes a symbol of his or her inherent goodness and purity: "la lumière morale et métaphysique que révèle les sentiments cachés au fond d'une âme".<sup>387</sup> Contrasting with the dark obscurity of the adult world, key representatives of youth, such as

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<sup>383</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 60.

<sup>384</sup> Ousselin, "European Utopia", 32.

<sup>385</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 143.

<sup>386</sup> Cosette is the illegitimate daughter of grisette turned prostitute Fantine, who is left in the care of the Thénardiens, exploitative innkeepers who beat and maltreat her, until she is later rescued by Valjean.

<sup>387</sup> Guy F. Imhoff, "Jeux d'ombre et de lumière dans 'Les Misérables' de Victor Hugo", *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2001): 65. Translation: "the moral and metaphysical light which reveals the feelings hidden at the heart of the soul".

Cosette, is a perfect embodiment of “naïveté, ingénuité, transparence, blancheur, candour, rayon”, her bright clarity in appearance functioning as a mirroring of her artlessness of character.<sup>388</sup> On occasion, the presence of light reveals the reality of this once neglected and abused child, for example the candlelight of the Thénardiens’ home “rendait sa maigreur affreusement visible”, producing something of an “affecting tableau of an innocent child in the lair of wild beasts.”<sup>389 390</sup> However, ultimately, the illumination of the child as if in spotlight emphasises her role as a shard of hope within a world which has otherwise become “noyé de ténèbres”.<sup>391</sup> Like a shining beacon, a bright radiance thus far unsullied by the onset of adulthood, Cosette plays her Hugo-assigned role well.

This is extended further by the illustration of Cosette by Émile Bayard (fig. 3.3), whose popularity has soared since its use on posters advertising various subsequent musical adaptations. In this way alone, the image of Cosette as the archetypal ‘Hugolian’ child, becomes the ‘face’ of her kin’s story, an attractive form of merchandise by which to promote the morbid consumption of her plight. Bayard’s *Cosette* was originally a drawing completed for the 1862 publication, but was reproduced as an engraving for the 1886 publication. The monochrome artwork features the little girl at the very centre, dressed in rags and stood barefoot as she mournfully sweeps. Dwarfed by her surroundings, the broom, the bucket, the steps and the wooden gate all proportionally enormous compared with little Cosette, her defencelessness is emphasised. The diminutiveness of this little girl offers a startling new slant on the notion of the “authentic *small* world of the young child”; that is to

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<sup>388</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, ed. Maurice Allem, (Edition de la Pléiade [Gallimard]: Paris, 1951), 1030. Translation: “naivety, gullibility, transparency, purity, integrity, sunbeam”.

<sup>389</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, 415. Translation: “rendered her thinness frightfully visible”.

<sup>390</sup> Joakim Reinhard, “Victor Hugo’s Novels I”, *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1899), 42.

<sup>391</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, ed. Allem, 1202. Translation: “drowned in darkness”.



say, one whose smallness serves as an indicator of her personal vulnerability and the lonely insignificance of her lot more than it does the endearing seclusion of the world of a happy childhood.<sup>392</sup> Being that “nineteenth-century photographers were fascinated by ‘beggar maids’ and street children; cheeky urchins”, it is unsurprising that *Cosette* proved a memorable image, as well as a popular marketing ploy.<sup>393</sup> Although it lacks the drama of an emaciated child as captured by Daumier and Pissarro, *Cosette* is the very embodiment of the fragile, and angelically naïve child so appealing to the middle and upper classes.

The majority of the image is muddy grey in colour, with dark smudges of shadow notably in the windows, reflecting the lack of warmth and solace even to be found indoors, but it is markedly Cosette’s face and upper body which is highlighted by bright, unmodulated white. She is illuminated by what resembles a halo of light, a spotlight of focus on this angelic yet afflicted child who rises like a beam of celestial goodness, “a condensation of the light of dawn” from the grunge of the puddle which surrounds her.<sup>394</sup> She is strikingly doll-like, her cherubim face, glowing against the dreary background, is characterised by the watchful gaze of her saucer-like eyes, to her left and away from her work, suggesting fear of an impending threat or some sinister adult surveillance to which she is all too accustomed: “she is a victim, with a frank, and very wide-eyed awareness”.<sup>395</sup> In much the same way that “la lumière est aussi l’innocence de la jeunesse”, Hugo had taken to “portraying children who were both heroes and victims”; they are as much

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<sup>392</sup> Richard N. Coe, *When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 35-36.

<sup>393</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 158

<sup>394</sup> Victor Hugo quoted in Reinhard, “Victor Hugo’s Novels I”, 40.

<sup>395</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 198.

victims of the same condescending fascination that heralded them the miniature heroes of popular culture.<sup>396 397</sup>

Cosette's commodification as the bourgeois trope of engaging, poverty-stricken girlhood, the Pears Soap-style poster girl advertisement for "the dramatic and moral possibilities of innocence confronted with life", points to the habit in this period for the practice of what Valerie Walkerdine calls a "ubiquitous fetishisation of girlhood which is at once innocent and erotic."<sup>398 399</sup> The working-class girl thus becomes a multi-layered motif, for her depiction as the helpless, needy little girl cements her popularity within a patriarchal society that often centred upon "a middle-aged man's (sexual) longing for a young girl who was a mixture of childish innocence and ripening eroticism."<sup>400</sup> The paintings of Edgar Degas in which he focuses upon "the ballet, the modern locus of sexual exchange and public display" and for which he is most renowned, go some significant way to illustrate common perceptions of working-class girls, and especially their relationship with middle class society, namely the gendered gaze of the 'superior' adult male.<sup>401</sup>

Degas' *Répétition d'un ballet sur la scène (Rehearsal on Stage)* (1874) (fig. 3.4), is a work typical of Degas' paintings of ballet practices and rehearsals.<sup>402</sup> The viewer looks out across the stage from one side, surveying various ballerinas stretching, posing and pirouetting in full costumes of flounciness, tiered tutus, surrounded by a mixture of forest scenery, and male instructors and patrons. The

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<sup>396</sup> Imhoff, "Jeux d'ombre", 69. Translation : "the light is as much innocence as it is youth."

<sup>397</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 151.

<sup>398</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 194.

<sup>399</sup> Valerie Walkerdine, *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>401</sup> Tamar Garb, *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>402</sup> *Répétition d'un ballet sur la scène (Rehearsal on Stage)* hereafter referred to as *Répétition*.

stereotypical interplay of the poising femininity of the ballerinas, twirling like dainty woodland fairies, and the mysterious yet authoritative male, either he who moves amongst the girls instructing them, or the watchful, judgmental figures who lurk partially obscured in the shadowy offstage nooks of licentious surveillance, is plethoric in symbolism. Not only does it represent the notion of the “male license to openly stare at – and to touch and talk about – women’s bodies and the fetishized commodities associated”, but it is also suggestive of “rather orgiastic undertones [and] all icons of male desire and possession” inherent within the worlds of child-female dance and fairy-filled exoticism.<sup>403 404</sup>

The popularity of fairy paintings as representative of the “quintessential Other, allied with the occult, savage, bizarre, and also the child-like” in Victorian Britain (for example fig. 3.5) is chronologically and thematically congruent with Degas’ ballet paintings, for both offer for the (presumably) male viewer a “retreat into secret, even taboo, sexual worlds and activities of ‘little people, both fairies and the young’”.<sup>405</sup> Consider, for example, Jean-Louis Forain’s (1852-1931) painting *Le Client (The Client)* (1878) (fig. 3.6), heavily inspired by Degas’ work, perhaps specifically his 1877 sketch of the same name (fig. 3.7), in which nude though decoratively adorned women, presumably prostitutes, are paraded before an obscured male client, moustached, dressed in black and wearing a lofty top hat, rendering him strikingly similar to one of the men seated offstage observing the ballet rehearsal in Degas’ *Répétition*. By depicting the male in-artwork viewer

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<sup>403</sup> Gail Reekie, “Decently Dressed? Sexualised Consumerism and the Working Woman’s Wardrobe 1918-1923”, *Labour History*, No. 61 (1991): 55.

<sup>404</sup> Susan P. Casteras, “Winged fantasies: constructions of childhood, innocence, adolescence, and sexuality in Victorian fairy painting” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 130.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

almost identically, regardless of whether it is young dancing girls or prostitutes he is observing, both Degas and Forain create a sense of assimilation, enhancing and generalising “the sexualisation of the working woman” or girl.<sup>406</sup>

What is more, Degas’ comparison in particular of the two men, and by extension the two scenes, is indicative of a rather damning, though fairly accurate, prediction of the future of the working-class girl. Functioning as the artistic harbinger of doom, Degas is just as dark and foreboding as the reality of the world to which this dancing girl belongs, anticipating this commodified child’s fate in a way that reveals his subtle pictorial social commentary: “in the half-grown ballet girl he shows already the future prostitute. He is like Nature, merciless, coldly sceptical.”<sup>407</sup> Similarly, Forain’s 1877 work *Un Coucheur (A Bedtime)* (fig. 3.8) depicts a familiarly foreboding scene, in which a young girl illuminated by the waning flickers of her candle is closely followed like a looming black shadow by the menacing form of a corpulent bourgeois male, who, armed with his two bottles, seems intent upon a ‘bedtime’ of excess and pleasure, of which the young girl’s misfortune renders her a reluctant but powerless victim.

Returning to Degas’ most common and famous subject of the dancer, like the juxtaposed image of “miniaturised femme fatale [alongside] vulnerable girlhood” of the fairy, the ballerina or dancing girl, confusingly prepubescent yet with “an oddly voluptuous body” comes to represent a sort of mythical inhabitant of an exotic land.<sup>408 409</sup> The little girl dancer functions as a kind of “cipher for an ethereal

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<sup>406</sup> Reekie, “Decently Dressed”, 42.

<sup>407</sup> Max Liebermann and Adrian Stokes, “Degas”, *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts and Industries*, Vol. 28, No. 247 (1900), 118.

<sup>408</sup> Casteras, “Winged fantasies”, 130.

<sup>409</sup> Walkerdine, *Daddy’s Girl*, 140.

fantasy or a world transported from the tensions of modernity”.<sup>410</sup> Not only does she offer an escape from the mundaneness of *fin-de-siècle* urban life, but by attaching a sense of exotic otherworldliness to this dancer, who is precariously at once child-like and sexually enticing, her allurements somehow relinquishes its paedophilic undertones and becomes more sanctioned in modern eyes. This connection was buttressed by favouring floral and mythical roles for female dancers, for not only did they appear non-human and therefore exempt from the rules of the human world, but “in their common guise as flowers and fauna, they reflected the popular image of *Art Nouveau* in which women and nature were represented in symbiotic relationship”.<sup>411</sup>

Consider Degas’ famous 1878 piece *L’Étoile* (*The Star*) (fig. 3.9), in which a prima ballerina is featured curtsying, her arms delicately aloft and her face glowing beneath the spotlight under which she is thrust, as she is clad in a wispy tutu and bodice, elaborately decorated with russet flowers to match her ornate headdress. From the gentle arabesques of her corporeal shape and the poised singularity of her fingers, to the ethereal semi-translucence of her gown and the warm blooms of flora, she closely resembles the angelic goddesses of nature depicted by pioneer of the *Art Nouveau* movement Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939), as in his 1896 work *Printemps* (*Spring*) (fig. 3.10). Furthermore, the floral extravagance of these mythical females “also provided the excuse for fantastical costumes [...] the tightening of the waist accentuated the curves of breast and buttocks”, enhancing the womanly appearance and thus sexual appeal of these often underdeveloped bodies.

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<sup>410</sup> Garb, *Body in Time*, 20.

<sup>411</sup> Alexandra Carter, “Blonde, Bewigged and Winged with Gold: Ballet Girls in the Music Halls of Late Victorian and Edwardian England”, *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1995), 38.

This aptly-named ‘star’, brilliant white under the dazzling lights of the stage, is exploited for her unique appeal as both innocent and knowing, a fragile child flung at the mercy of bourgeois fancy, vulnerable yet somehow solemnly aware of her lot. By way of a link to the notion of the poor child as an animal, sweet but sub-human, and thus a simple pet in service of the amusement of social superiors, Degas’ ballerina becomes a sort of dancing bear, a mere spectacle of public entertainment, dressed up in inappropriate garb, and prodded and poked until she performs as desired.

In many ways reminiscent of Charles Baudelaire’s “preference for the ‘primitive toy’ and, more specifically, for what he sees as the poetry of the poor child’s play thing”, the depiction and exploitation of the working class child as a fascinating and quantifiable commodity suggests something of the poet’s notion of “the living toy.”<sup>412</sup> This concept first appeared in Baudelaire’s *Le joujou de pauvre* (*The Plaything of the Poor*) which, written as part of some fifty-one prose poems constituting his famous posthumously-published *Le Spleen de Paris* (*Paris Spleen*) (1869), remains frequently linked to the separate short prose piece entitled *Morale du joujou* (*Moral of the Plaything*) (1853). The latter details the narrator’s childhood memories of a trip to a mesmerising toyshop which opened upon “une chambre où s’offrait un spectacle extraordinaire et vraiment féerique” and which forever filled him with a nostalgic and philosophical consideration of the significance of the toy’s relationship with a child.<sup>413</sup> A moralistic imbuelement of the tale comes from the

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<sup>412</sup> Marilyn R. Brown, “Introduction: Baudelaire between Rousseau and Freud”, in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 9.

<sup>413</sup> Baudelaire, “Morale du joujou (et du pauvre)”, *Le Monde littéraire*, 17 April, 1853, Bibliothèque Municipale de Lisieux electronic collection,

introduction of the ‘joujou de pauvre’, which offers a truer magic of imagination which renders the finest creations redundant in the eyes of those who succeed most effectively of all when “ils jouent sans joujoux”.<sup>414</sup> In much the same way that ‘primitive’ folk were considered easily appeased and impressed by simple aspects of modern civilisation, bourgeois society viewed poor children as similarly placated: “it was easy to keep them happy with the simplest of playthings, such as little rag dolls, clay marbles, and windmills made from bits of wood and feathers, or for children to improve themselves with sticks, pebbles and pieces of cloth.”<sup>415</sup>

Perhaps more revelatory in this instance, however, is the moment a poor beggar child shows his curious middle class equivalent his own most cherished toy:

“de l'autre côté de la grille, sur la route, entre chardons et orties, il y avait un autre enfant, sale, assez chétif, un de ces marmots sur lesquels la morve se fraye lentement un chemin dans la crasse et la poussière [...] l'enfant pauvre montrait à l'enfant riche son joujou, que celui-ci examinait avidement comme un objet rare et inconnu. Or ce joujou que le petit souillon agaçait, agitait et secouait dans une boîte grillée, était un rat vivant ! Les parents par économie, avaient tiré le joujou de la vie elle-même.”<sup>416</sup>

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<http://www.bmlisieux.com/litterature/ baudelaire/moraljou.htm>. Translation: “a room which offered an extraordinary and truly magical spectacle”. Charles

<sup>414</sup> Baudelaire, “Morale du joujou”. Translation: “they play without toys”.

<sup>415</sup> Robert Jalby, “Folklore de Languedoc” quoted in Heywood, *Growing Up*, 185.

<sup>416</sup> Baudelaire, “Morale du joujou”. Translation: “on the other side of the railings, on the road between the nettles and the weeds there was another child, dirty, quite puny, one of those kids on which mucus slowly makes its way through the dirt and dust [...] the poor child showed the rich child his toy, which he keenly examined like a rare and unidentified object. But this toy that the slovenly little child teased, waved and shook in a cage, was a living rat! The parents, in the interests of economy, had taken the toy from life itself.”

Whilst the rich child's captivation with the poor child's living toy points to the inevitable dissatisfaction with the manufactured toy's lifelessness – “La plupart des marmots veulent surtout *voir l'âme*,” – it indicates, in a more sombre pallor, of another understanding of the significance of this particular plaything: “À propos du joujou du pauvre, j'ai vu quelque chose de plus simple encore, mais de plus triste que le joujou à un sou, - c'est le joujou vivant” of the poor child itself.<sup>417</sup> That is to say, in light of perhaps an alternative reading of Baudelaire's writings on the notion of the ‘living toy’, alongside analysis of literature and artwork reflective of the morbid commodification of the poor child, he or she is established, rather darkly, as a sort of plaything for the rich. The child of poverty becomes for the rich their very own living toy through which they can take a touristic participation in a world far removed from their own, perpetuating an ignorant sort of fascinating exoticism associated with the plight of the poor child, an exploitation of which results in a sort of bodily and emotional debasement so chronic that it ultimately leaves the observer ironically wondering, upon consideration of the child, “*mais où est l'âme?*”<sup>418</sup>

Returning to Degas, by way of a dusky, lonely alleyway, a claustrophobic length of narrowing darkness through which we must skulk, we encounter the artist's bipartite employment of chiaroscuro as both an indicator of his own rapidly darkening world due to the hasty onset of blindness, and the subtle emotional and moral sully undergone by the working child by virtue of the overbearing shadow of society's gaze. Degas' work *Femme avec les Jumelles* (*Woman with Binoculars*) (fig. 3.11) provides a disconcerting indication of the artist's relationship with vision,

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<sup>417</sup> Baudelaire, “Morale du joujou”. Translation: “Most kids want really to *see the soul*” and “With regards to the plaything of the poor, I saw something even simpler, but even sadder than the penny toy – the living toy.”

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. Translation: “But *where is the soul?*”



chiaroscuro, and the gaze. The drawing consists of a single young woman intently staring out at the viewer through a pair of binoculars, offering both the artist and the spectator “an almost disquieting sensation of the represented instant and of seeing [...] himself being seen.”<sup>419</sup>

The work is dominated overall by white, rendering the black fixation of the binoculars all the more intense, offering a deeper reading to the contention that “just as the damage to his eyes created a ‘dull patch’ and areas of light haze, it must also have left between them areas of relatively clear vision”; that is to say, the visual darkness which blanketed his sight, represented here by the concentration of ink around the persistence of the binocular eyes is offset by, and perhaps gives rise to, the clarity of vision, represented by the stark whiteness of the rest of the artwork, to which Degas afforded society and its severest woes.<sup>420</sup> Such was Degas’ perceived skill in the art of chiaroscuro that he has been compared to Rembrandt in this regard, for he too “had proved that the weightiest comparison may be asserted without colour, by the mere action of light and shade.”<sup>421</sup> However, whilst Degas, like Rembrandt, seemed to be “of the opinion that all colours can be implied with a skilful use of black and white”, it is arguably the case that Degas’ chiaroscuro is of a more deeply symbolic form, functioning not only as a pointer to his own failing eyesight, but also to a general darkening of the world and starkness of social polarity comparable with that of black and white.<sup>422</sup>

To this end, much of Degas’ artwork is less suggestive of the paradisiacal and exotic world of the dancing female, and is instead arguably more representative

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<sup>419</sup> R. McMullen, *Degas: His Life, Times and Work* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 134.

<sup>420</sup> Richard Kendall, “Degas and the Contingency of Vision”, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 130, No. 1020 (1988), 191.

<sup>421</sup> Eugène Fromentin, *The Masters of Past Time*, ed. H. Gerson (London: Phaidon Press, 1960), 220.

<sup>422</sup> Virginia Nirdlinger, “Notes of Degas”, *Parnassus*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1937), 20.

of the harsh reality of the ballet girl's existence, exposing "the sexually available, partially clothed, commodified corpus of the working woman [which] embodied the carnal materiality of modern metropolitan life".<sup>423</sup> Far from the magical, floral land of plenty that the ballerinas seemingly advertise with the hypnotic and supple rhythms of their youthful bodies, aloof and exotically unattainable, Degas portrays many of these girls as in fact highly typical of the sordid degeneracy from which their viewers seek escape but to which the performer is depressingly confined. Degas' artwork maximises on the sexual promiscuity associated with the "debased but highly desirable form of public entertainment" of ballet spectacles, and with urban and city life in general.<sup>424</sup>

By way of support of the common assertion that "working class women showed a great propensity to breed rapidly, [representing] a surfeit of sexuality, a dangerous fecundity", Degas produced a significant corpus of artwork that showed ballet dancers in more humanly raw circumstances, without the artfulness of performance.<sup>425</sup> Degas' depiction of the dancer behind the scenes and without a formal audience exposes an arguably darker, seedier, more closeted and unchecked commodification and consumption of the young female form, perhaps even pointing to the concealment of "juvenile prostitution [and] those dens of infamy into which young girls are decoyed."<sup>426</sup>

One of the most effective ways in which Degas achieves this notion of the working girl who is at once an object of both public and private consumption is his production of artworks in which the positions and viewpoints of resting and

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<sup>423</sup> Garb, *Body in Time*, 4.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Walkerdine, *Daddy's Girl*, 30.

<sup>426</sup> "Protection of Young Girls", *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1209 (1884): 430.

preparing ballet dancers are mimicked by those of nudes and bathers. That is to say, the livelihood of performance from which these exhausted dancing girls are ostensibly taking a break in fact lives on even in the would-be private realms of backstage and the home. Degas the artist functions as a symbol of the eternal watchful gaze of masculinity and bourgeois, patriarchal society in general, whose presence is everlasting as much in public as in private arenas, regardless of whether the girl is a dancer or not, and irrespective of her consent or lack thereof to be viewed, consumed and shared. In summary, whether the girl is a ballerina in mid-performance, a dancer at rest or in preparation, or simply bathing at home, her role and purpose as a working class female and therefore a spectacle for the male gaze is identical.

Degas' 1880 pastel and chalk sketch *Danseuse ferme sa ballerine* (*Dancer Fastening her Pump*) (fig. 3.12) and his 1886 pastel drawing *Le Tub* (*The Tub*) (fig. 3.13), considered together, illustrate this.<sup>427</sup> In both works, the artist and viewer peer down at the young female subject, her exposed back demonstrative of her vulnerability. The similarity of the females, in the dimpled shape of their backs, the flexed arm, obscurity of "faces [that] have been obliterated" or hidden, and the scraping of their hair into an untidy bun, which in itself "served as an emblem of the transition from childhood to adulthood", all of which offer a lack of discernible identity and age, suggest little differentiation on the part of the viewer and consumer of the little girl ballerina and the nude bather.<sup>428 429</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> *Danseuse ferme sa ballerine* (*Dancer Fastening her Pump*) hereafter referred to as *Ballerine*.

<sup>428</sup> Eugenia Parry Janis, "Master of Chiaroscuro", *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 7 (1972), 57.

<sup>429</sup> Diane Waggoner, "Photographing Childhood – Lewis Carroll and Alice" in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 153.

The childish uncouthness of this “bowed and spread-legged worker” in *Ballerine* is a frequent image of Degas’ work, appearing in both *Danseuse à la barre* (*Dancer at the Bar*) (fig. 3.14) and *Danseuses à la barre* (*Dancers at the Bar*) (fig. 3.15).<sup>430</sup> Not only is the ungainly awkwardness of these dancers’ pose reflected, as before, in the intimate positioning of bathers, for example in *La baignoire II* (*The Bath II*) (fig. 3.16), but the peculiarity of their shapes and the apparent multiplicity of their limbs forms what Félix Fénéon terms “a confusion of arms and legs [that resembled] an epileptic Hindu god.”<sup>431</sup> Whilst a sort of mass of bumbling heads or a tangle of instruments crammed into the foreground was a common feature of Degas’ ballet performance artworks, the bodily amalgamation of young dancers stretching or at rest points to a much deeper metaphorical understanding of their condition.<sup>432</sup>

On the one hand, the proximity and similarity of the two dancers renders them suggestive of the foggy blurring of shapes and individuals to be found in the early photographic experimentation which fascinated Degas, in which “two shots [are] conflated into a single image [exposing] light phantoms [which] emerge into visibility *through* each other, [...] transformed into a hallucinatory, spectral image.”<sup>433</sup> The ethereality of the image supports Stéphane Mallarmé’s notion that the ballerina is “*not a girl*, but rather a metaphor... and *she does not dance*, but rather... she *suggests* things.”<sup>434</sup> However, a more scrupulous reading might reject the apparent innocuousness of figures appearing under artistic license as “more akin

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<sup>430</sup> Garb, *Body in Time*, 38.

<sup>431</sup> Félix Fénéon quoted in Joan Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Oeuvres plus que complètes* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1970), 96.

<sup>432</sup> Colta Ives, “French Prints in the Era of Impressionism and Symbolism”, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1988), 16.

<sup>433</sup> Douglas Crimp, “Positive/Negative: A Note on Degas’s Photographs”, *October*, Vol. 5 (1978), 91.

<sup>434</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, “Ballets” quoted in *Selected Prose, Poems, Essays, and Letters*, trans. Branford Cook (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), 62.

to colour expression than human beings” in favour of understanding Degas’ bodily amalgamation of working girlhood as indicative of their dwindling personhood before the shadow of the public gaze.<sup>435</sup> Like the fecundity, deformity and contagiousness associated with their general condition of poverty, these young girls are “grouped together with arms and legs that seem to multiply, long and supple like creepers [they] rise up like apparitions in the night, like passers-by whose lives are expressed in gestures and smiles that begin to take shape and rapidly disappear”, characterised by their crowd-like anonymity before the amusement, scorn and disregard of popular society.<sup>436</sup>

However, it is perhaps Degas’ 1881 sculpture *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Little Dancer of Fourteen*) (figs. 3.17-3.21) which best portrays the concept and role of the little girl dancer as the epitome of the working class child. It is perhaps testament to Degas’ waning eyesight that he leaned increasingly towards sculpture in his final years, feeling and moulding the observed scene.<sup>437</sup> Two-thirds life size, the particular diminutiveness of the work is indicative of both her youth and her vulnerability. Originally sculpted in wax, but boasting a wig of real hair and a fabric bodice, ballet shoes and tutu, and modelled on a young student of the Paris Opera Ballet dance school, named Marie van Goethem, the sculpture has all the makings of a strikingly lifelike representation of French nineteenth-century modernity. Moreover, by virtue of being based upon a real child, and including human hair and real dancer’s clothing, but posed and moulded by the artist for the viewer, Degas’ sculpture perfectly embodies the role and value of the child, for she

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<sup>435</sup> James Huneker, *Promenades of an Impressionist* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 82.

<sup>436</sup> Gustave Geffroy, *La Vie Artistique* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1894), 173.

<sup>437</sup> Kendall, “Contingency of Vision”, 195.

has all the appearance of life without any of the volition of a real person. This notion is enhanced yet further by the twenty-eight bronze casts made of the sculpture from 1920 onwards, which have since been distributed to various galleries and museums around the world. Not only does “the fragmentation of the modern body into component parts” fetishise the female form of this young dancer as she is shipped off and reassembled worldwide, but it also contributes to a solidification of the material replicability and lack of individuality attributed to the child in general.<sup>438</sup>

As a young student of the ballet school, one of the many *petits rats* of Paris, this particular dancer will not have taken centre stage but instead formed part of the body, or *corps*, of supporting dancers, which is significant in itself: “the *corps* did not go on *pointe* nor did they have any aerial movement; their vocabulary was earth-bound and mundane [and so] she appeared as far more amenable, more accessible, for the gaze of the audience.”<sup>439</sup> This vocational degradation was matched by a personal one, specifically a debasement founded upon the perceived sub-human condition of the poor child, reflected in Degas’ sculpted portrayal of “an infantilised, animalised working class, closer to their instincts [and] physically less well-developed”.<sup>440</sup> Her child poverty is shown in the awkward underdevelopment of her postured body, further evidenced in Degas’ preparatory bronze sculpture *Étude Nue Pour La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Nude Study for the Little Dancer of Fourteen*) (1879-1880) (fig. 3.22), in which the nude body is disturbingly similar to that of a small infant, with the protruding stomach and mere bud-like beginnings of

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<sup>438</sup> Garb, *Body in Time*, 21.

<sup>439</sup> Carter, “Blonde, Bewigged”, 38. *Petits rats* was a term given to young ballerinas in training.

<sup>440</sup> Walkerdine, *Daddy’s Girl*, 44.

her breasts indicative of a girl far younger than fourteen, and thus potential malnourishment.

More revealing still is the child's face, which, oddly jutting forward and upwards, has solicited much commentary for its apparent suggestion of animalistic immorality deemed symptomatic of the lowest classes. Whilst more modern readings have been sympathetic, with art historian Tim Marlow declaring that the little girl perhaps bears "the image of a sickly, gawky adolescent who is being made to do something she does not totally want to do" as opposed to being deliberately ugly, reviews at the time of the sculpture's unveiling in 1881 were somewhat blunter, and thus revealing of the shape of popular opinion in that period.<sup>441</sup> Leading art historian Paul Mantz concluded that "with bestial effrontery she thrusts forward her face, or rather her little muzzle – and this word is completely correct because this poor girl is the beginnings of a rat", and Jules Claretie agreed, declaring that "the vicious muzzle of this little, barely pubescent girl, this little flower of the gutter, is unforgettable".<sup>442 443</sup>

The language chosen by both of these critics is unmistakably pregnant with the scathing disdain which typically characterised a superior's opinion of the inferior, for as much as condescension often outwardly prevailed, a sense of lofty wariness often remained steadfast: "the image of the street urchin has an uneasy presence in the imagery of childhood – combining pathos with a sense of resilience and engaging impudence."<sup>444</sup> The likening of this particular girl to a sewer-dwelling beast not only points to the *petits rats* terminology, but also the severity of censure

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<sup>441</sup> Tim Marlow, "Tim Marlow on... Degas, Sickert & Toulouse-Lautrec" (television programme on Channel 5, UK, 2005).

<sup>442</sup> Paul Mantz, "L'Exposition des oeuvres des artistes indépendants", *Le Temps*, 23 April (1881), 3.

<sup>443</sup> Jules Claretie, *La Vie à Paris, 1881* (Paris : Victor Harvard, 1882), 150.

<sup>444</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 158.

to which the working child is subject; she is considered nothing more than a dirty, scavenging, unwanted spreader of disease.

This, coupled with the constant undercurrent of fear upon which the rich's mistreatment of the poor is often based, is reminiscent of a legend frequently recounted by Hugo, in which wicked Archbishop Hatto locked the starving poor of his Rhineland parish in a barn, set it alight, and exclaimed "Entendez-vous siffler les rats?" after which "the peasants all died, but from the ashes there emerged hordes of rats, who chased the evil Hatto [...] the rats swam across the water to the island in the Rhine, gnawed their way into the fortress, found the guilty Hatto cowering in the cellar and ate him alive."<sup>445</sup> Not only did such notions give new weight and significance to the assertion that "nineteenth-century cities swarmed with children", but they contributed to the very ignorance and fear which ironically fuelled the perpetual debasement of the child in a bid to reiterate and restore a hierarchy of norms and a peaceful mind: "accumulation of frightful, vague, and dark images evokes intellectual doubt."<sup>446 447</sup>

This degradation of the child increases when one considers the prevalence at this time of Johann Kaspar Lavater's theories on physiognomy (1775-1778), that is to say, the study of one's physical appearance, especially their facial features, as indicative of their personality traits, which enjoyed a resurgence in nineteenth-century France and Germany. Lavater's accompanying woodcut illustration (fig. 3.23) features four heads in profile, offering a precise depiction of the forehead, nose and chin in particular. Whilst art historian Ernst Gombrich warned of

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<sup>445</sup> Richard B. Grant, "Victor's Hugo's 'Le Rhin' and the Search for Identity", *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1995), 328.

<sup>446</sup> Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, 168.

<sup>447</sup> Edward K. Kaplan, "Victor Hugo and the Poetics of Doubt: The Transition of 1835-1837", *French Forum*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1981), 149.



“physiognomical fallacy”, the dangers and inaccuracies of making assumptions about a person’s inner workings based upon his external features, historian Ludmilla Jordanova has since reminded us of the contemporary relevance nevertheless of Lavater’s theories, for we continue today to pass judgment on the basis of inferences from appearance.<sup>448 449</sup>

Lavater’s work endeavoured to present the ‘science’ of this particular theory, asserting that “the natural and essential bony skull and its carefully measured proportions are the true indicators of the character of man, whereas the face and flesh are the accidentals”, on the basis that the skull and bony structure of the nose is worked upon from within by the brain, the controller of mental activity, and from the other side by the muscles, which are governed by the faculties of emotion and passion; our facial structure, therefore, is essentially born of our very personhood and nature.<sup>450</sup> Degas’ 1881 work *Physiognomie de criminel (Criminal Physiognomy)* (fig. 3.24), a sort of courtroom sketch, filled with “the authenticity of the observed scene”, both resembles Lavater’s book’s illustrations and is demonstrative of Degas awareness of such theories on physical attributes identified with the criminal and immoral.<sup>451</sup> Moreover, this was a sketch produced in the same year as the sculpture, connecting and propagating judgements and opinions typical of the period, which attached a sense of animal immorality and even criminality to this adolescent ballerina on the basis of her facial appearance. By way of emphasis, observe the

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<sup>448</sup> Joan K. Stemmler, “The Physiognomical Portraits of Johann Caspar Lavater”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (1993), 151.

<sup>449</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, “Reading Faces in the Nineteenth Century”, *Art History*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1990), 571.

<sup>450</sup> Stemmler, “Physiognomical Portraits”, 157.

<sup>451</sup> Lisa Bixenstine Safford, “Mallarmé’s Influence on Degas’ Aesthetic of Dance in his Late Period”, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, Vol. 21, No.3/4 (1993), 426.

precise similarities between the facial contours depicted in the ballerina sculpture (figs. 3.20 and 3.21) and those of the criminals in court (fig. 3.24).

As Degas undergoes “a relentless pursuit into the depths of ugliness”, his lattermost works, fuelled by a mixture of his crippling photophobia and the connected depression of his spirits, continue to plumb the very lowest extremes of society, those which very little light manages to touch.<sup>452</sup> This little girl of sculpture, not blessed with the moronic beauty of childhood and thus illuminated and exploited by a perverted fascination with the glow of innocent hardship, is instead therefore, relegated to the darkest depths of society, to what Hugo termed the “tabernacle terrible de l’inconnu.”<sup>453</sup> And it is within this enshrouding of nothingness that one’s personhood slowly ebbs away, absorbed by the darkness like a cloak of invisibility under which one is nothing more than the shape of their past self: “there is a level of poverty at which we are afflicted with a kind of indifferences which causes all things to seem unreal: those closest to us become no more than shadows.”<sup>454</sup>

Hugo’s work, like his life, was “a giant tension between light and darkness and it spilled out onto paper with thunderous impact.”<sup>455</sup> This manifested itself multifariously, not least in the constant battle and interplay of the light and goodness inherent within childhood and the dark evil of the world beyond, steadfast in his ‘Rousseauian’ belief that life, experience, and the actions of others sully the purity

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<sup>452</sup> Daniel Halévy, *Pays Parisiens*, trans. Mina Curtiss (London: Vintage Books, 1966), 114.

<sup>453</sup> Victor Hugo quoted in David Gervais, “Hugo and Victor Hugo”, *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1999), 117. Translation: “the terrible tabernacle of the unknown.”

<sup>454</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Norman Denny, (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1980, Volume 2 of 2), 117.

<sup>455</sup> Theodore Nottingham, *Hugo: The Strange Life and Visions of Victor Hugo* (Indianapolis: Theosis Books, 2011), 6.

of the child: “L’homme naît bon [...] et la société le deprave.”<sup>456</sup> Evidenced in his literature and his artworks, Hugo “voit la vie en blanc et en noir.”<sup>457</sup> This manifested itself equally in his general outlook on the distinctness and disparity between the two gulfs of society upon which his conscience and work concentrated; for Hugo, like dark over light, evil engulfed like a giant, spreading shadow over good, sullyng society beyond repair. What is more, the vacuity of such a shadow, the narrow decumbence of its emptiness implies, in turn, an extreme banality which reflects that “the flatness of their world is that of the grave.”<sup>458</sup>

This oftentimes “author of the savage horror story [was equally] a man of a thousand faces”, one of which looked to emphasise that even in the foreboding face of society’s harsh and despotic treatment of children, their natural benevolence continued to break through, on occasion, like a ray of sunlight cutting through a rain-heavy cloud, in the adoption of a sort of fraternal togetherness and determination to survive against all the odds.<sup>459</sup> The character of Gavroche in *Les Misérables* stands out as a particularly poignant example of such a child, for he, in the absence of familial affection and shelter, turns to a life on the street, during which he takes two small boys under his wing, unaware that they are in fact his younger brothers, and is thus not motivated by blood links, but by a genuine concern for his fellow urchin, personifying “the spirit of the child to survive, to cope, to

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<sup>456</sup> Raymond Trousson, “Victor Hugo juge de Jean-Jacques Rousseau”, *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (1986), 982. Translation: “Man is born good [...] and society corrupts him.”

<sup>457</sup> Joanna Richardson, *Victor Hugo* (New York : St Martin’s Press, 1976), 171. Translation: “sees life in white and in black”.

<sup>458</sup> Kathryn M. Grossman, “Homelessness, Wastelands, and Barricades: Transforming Dystopian Spaces in *Les Misérables*”, *Utopian Studies*, No. 4 (1991), 30.

<sup>459</sup> Nottingham, *Hugo*, 5.

forgive and always to reinvent.”<sup>460</sup> On the one hand, this notion of the hardier, sturdier child who territorially roamed the streets, enjoying “partial autonomy from the world of adults”, was perceived as a potential threat to the elites.<sup>461</sup>

Aforementioned connotations of primitivism and savagery gave rise to the notion of the ‘tribal child’ and a feared threat of mob-mentality, which in turn arrived back as if through a long, serpentine passageway of damp darkness, to the pervading image of the child in poverty as a muddled composite of animalistic miscellany.

Kathryn Grossman’s 1991 paper on the dystopian environments of Hugo’s novel goes some way to explore the ways in which the desolate and nebulous landscape of *Les Misérables* reflects the inchoateness and lacking sense of belonging of the ill-treated poor: “the dislocation of the family, repeated in the dislocation of the self, is figured by the barren, dystopian landscapes”.<sup>462</sup> Instead of being considered as individuals with desperate human needs, the tendency to see ‘the poor’ as merely a problematic mass, a collective nuisance to be borne by the state, resulted in the dehumanising of working class people on a dramatic scale. A cruel reflection of the low sense of self-worth suffered by the poor themselves, the state’s sweeping pigeonholing of these people served to rid them of any individuality and identity, for the exacerbation of this “destitution provides a hideous version of nothingness, an extreme mongrelisation [in which] they merge into an amorphous conglomerate”.<sup>463</sup>

Far from warm-blooded human beings with discernible and identifiable personalities, Hugo’s characters, much like Degas’ dancers, undergo a physical

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<sup>460</sup> Michael Morpurgo quoted in Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 11.

<sup>461</sup> Heywood, *Growing Up*, 196.

<sup>462</sup> Grossman, “Homelessness”, 30.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

debasement that symbolises their emotional and moral degradation, likening them to some rudimentary species or alien form: “How pale they are, those unfortunates, how cold they are! They might be the inhabitants of a planet far more distant from the sun than our own”.<sup>464</sup> Moreover, children and babies, naturally closer to their original embryonic state, begin to revert even more dramatically to a polyp-like existence. Resembling little more than a small, mucky grub, the children of Hugo’s poverty become “faceless larvae, the image of death itself, replac[ing] one’s beloved offspring”.<sup>465</sup>

The symbolic chiaroscuro of Hugo’s literature is buttressed by that of his lesser-known skills as an artist. From character portraits to darkly metaphorical landscapes, menacingly mystical designs and thoroughly abstract creations, Hugo excels in presenting a world which is in equal measure chillingly hostile and curiously infantile, embodying the child’s perception of a terrifying reality in the Parisian underworld. In his 1850 portrait *Gavroche à 11 ans* (*Gavroche at 11 years old*) (fig. 3.25), Hugo depicts the child in a fashion suggestive of both his stark humanity and his striking animalism. Contrary to Bayard’s considerably more realistic illustrations, Hugo’s Gavroche is something of a caricature. On the one hand, the enormous grin stretching across the boy’s animated face and his tousled hair suggest an impish child, on the other, his darkened chin and mouth appear abnormally large, gaping and jutting uncannily, and his hair, a mass of erratic pen strokes, appears out of control, combining to provide an image of some sort of rabid, beast-like creature who, far from a human of popular society, scavenged amongst the rubble of the barricades like vermin in a rubbish tip: “he crawled flat on his

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<sup>464</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Denny, Vol. 1, 639.

<sup>465</sup> Grossman, “Homelessness”, 30.

belly, galloped on all fours, took his basket in his teeth, twisted, glided, undulated, wound from one dead body to another, and emptied the cartridge-box or cartouche as a monkey opens a nut.”<sup>466</sup> Hugo’s portrait of Gavroche appears to be an amalgamation of both the child inside and the animal as viewed externally by society.

The frantic grubbiness of Gavroche and Hugo’s style is reflected again in the artist’s creative process. Experimenting with techniques that involved “‘pliage’, or the folding of blotted paper to create double images in the manner of Rorschach blots [...] the use of stencils and gum reserve, [...] mottling, printing with his fingers [...] pieces of lace dipped in ink, and ‘automatic’ drawing” as well as using various materials ranging from “ink, occasionally gouache and charcoal, but also [...] coffee, burnt matchsticks, coal dust, soot, squid ink (sepia), blackberry juice, caramelised onion, toothpaste, saliva” and even, experts suggest, urine, produce an image which consists of the same mucky mongrelisation (in appearance and smell) and psychological disturbance it depicts.<sup>467</sup>

In this way, and heightened by his personal experiences of woe by which he was tormented during his political exile in Jersey, Hugo, like Degas, found himself “forced [...] to work in fragments, always contending with semi-darkness” to which his vision, literal or metaphorical, confined him.<sup>468</sup> Hugo, like Degas, was also touched by photographic concepts (albeit the most rudimentary forms of light and shadow cast in the natural world), and was similarly afflicted in his work by the boundaries of darkness inflicted by experience on his soul: “he was fascinated by

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<sup>466</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Hapgood, Vol. 5, Book 1, Ch. 15.

<sup>467</sup> Nathan Kernan, “Review: *Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo*”, *On Paper*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (1998), 40-41.

<sup>468</sup> Halévy, *Pays Parisiens*, 116.

mystery and shadow, by any obscurity which invaded and engulfed him.”<sup>469</sup> Forever psychologically blighted by the intolerable fates of his children, and evidenced in his literature’s foreboding philosophy, Hugo “fell to pondering over what would be the result if the black submerged the white entirely, or the giant trampled on the dwarf.”<sup>470</sup> Whilst his exile landscape of Jersey “with its tree tunnels, easily suggests imprisonment”, spilling out into the social and emotional claustrophobia suffered by his characters, it is more specifically “Hugo’s inner ‘forest’ (and ours) [which] swarms with any number of half-seen, frightening creatures.”<sup>471 472</sup> In the same way that the condemning environment of the poor child becomes an all-consuming abyss, “Hugo’s forests became wild, living entities”, transgressing themselves like an unrelenting spread of black fog, leaving him in his depression, like a child constantly treading water in the endless cesspit of poverty, hopelessly “groping in labyrinthine darkness.”<sup>473 474</sup>

This wretchedness characterises Hugo’s ethereal landscapes, symbolic of environments and atmospheres both emotionally and somatically. *La ville morte* (*The dead city*) (c. 1850) (fig. 3.26) offers a city view so aridly bereft of humanity that it resembles photographs of blitzed European cities during the Second World War (figs. 3.27 and 3.28). The sharp brightness that Hugo employs in rough, scratchy patches in the foreground of *La ville morte* is reminiscent of the glowing embers of burning buildings, whilst the obscured shapes of spires in the dusky

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<sup>469</sup> Gervais, “Hugo and Victor Hugo”, 121. Hugo’s first child, Léopold, died in infancy, his daughter Léopoldine tragically drowned in a boating accident, his other daughter Adèle was later sectioned, and his other two sons died before he did.

<sup>470</sup> Reinhard, “Victor Hugo’s Novels I”, 38.

<sup>471</sup> John Andrew Frey, *Les Contemplations of Victor Hugo: The Ash Wednesday Liturgy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 147.

<sup>472</sup> Grant, “Victor’s Hugo’s ‘Le Rhin’”, 325.

<sup>473</sup> Richard B. Grant, “Victor Hugo’s ‘Le Deux Archers’: Patterns of Disguise and Revelation”, *Romance Notes*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1992), 217.

<sup>474</sup> Grant, “‘Le Rhin’”, 326.

background of Hugo's work is redolent of the towering structures choked in smoke, barely managing to ascend from the smouldering destruction beneath them.

Degas once lamented: "It takes some time to get accustomed to the strong light which hurts me in spite of my smoked glasses, but as soon as the dampness returns I am like today, my sight burnt from yesterday and broken up today."<sup>475</sup> Just as Degas struggled to come to terms with a vision so fragmented and dismayed, Hugo's landscape is one of great contrast between the fiery depths and smoky plumes. The interplay of sharpness and haze, much like that of light and dark, together symbolise not only the dramatic ongoing destruction of humanity on a physical level, but also that of a more emotional and visceral level, reminiscent of the sort of epically hellish ends of which William Blake mournfully told: "By degrees we beheld the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city; beneath us, at an immense distance, was the sun, black but shining; round it were fiery tracks on which revolved vast spiders, crawling after their prey, which flew, or rather swum, in the infinite deep, in the most terrific shapes of animals spring from corruption; and their air was full of them and seemed composed of them."<sup>476</sup>

Hugo's penchant for the ethereal extended beyond apocalyptic scenes to thoroughly ghoulish images which combined nature with fantasy. His works *Pieuvre avec les initiales V.H.* (*Octopus with the Initials V.H.*) (fig. 3.29) and *Le serpent* (*The snake*) (fig. 3.30) exemplify this, offering identifiable creatures of the earth arranged in a fashion that betrays their otherworldly faculties. Like the poor street children of Hugo's novel and the real world, existing in "that 'amphibious world',

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<sup>475</sup> Edgar Degas quoted in M. Guérin, M. *Degas Letters*, trans. M. Kay (Oxford, 1947), 96.

<sup>476</sup> William Blake, "Marriage of Heaven and Hell", in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 41.



the outskirts of Paris that attracts urchins and poets alike”, Hugo’s octopus and snake partake in the environments of both the very real and the very fantastical.<sup>477</sup> These mysterious animals, creatures of the unknown world which lurk beneath that of humans, shrouded in the darkness of concealed nooks and crannies or the inky depths of underwater realms, represent the marginalised existence of the neglected and poverty-stricken child, where exist also “crab-like souls which are continually retreating towards the darkness, retrograding in life rather than advancing, [...] their deformity, growing incessantly worse, and becoming more and more impregnated with an ever-augmenting blackness.”<sup>478</sup>

In much the same way that animals as seemingly alchemistic and inscrutable as an octopus or snake could not be accepted or trusted by humans like a cat or dog could, the poor child is forever ostracised from standard French society, and thus forced to forge its own existence in this “lieu monstrueux/Enfer d’ombre et de boue aux porches tortueux/Où les murs ont la lèpre, où parmi les pustules/Glissent les scorpions mêlés aux tarentules/Morne abîme!”<sup>479</sup> Hugo’s use of the arabesque becomes especially significant. The syncopated rhythms suggested by the sinuousness of the octopus’ tentacles and the snake’s body, the latter of which helped characterise the decorative style originally, became symbolic, in their subversion of the linear, of a lifestyle unconstrained by the dictate. These “intricate and elegant organic shapes which evoked a sense of restless movement”, intrinsic to reptilian, amphibious and aquatic organisms, represented just as fittingly the peasant

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<sup>477</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Denny, 498.

<sup>478</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Hapgood, Vol. 1, Book 4, Ch. 2.

<sup>479</sup> Hugo, Victor, “Le Chasseur Noir” (“The Black Hunter”) quoted in Gervais “Hugo and Victor Hugo”, 120. Translation: “monstrous place/A hell of shadow and mud with crooked porches/Where there are leprous walls, where amongst the pustules/Slide scorpions mixed with tarantulas/Gloomy abyss!”

child for whom a life within the neat, government-stipulated demarcations of society was not sanctioned and simply not possible, obliging them instead to conceive a swirly, undulating pathway upon the unstable world to which they have been relegated.<sup>480</sup> In a darker turn, the soft undulations of the snake's body quickly transform into the frenzied, jagged dagger-shape of the "phantom tongue flickering out from the shadow mouth, poised to devour and full of effrontery", serving as a reminder of the unpredictability and constant undercurrent of danger which characterises the life of the poor child.<sup>481</sup>

Hugo's efforts to depict the terror and unease at the heart of poverty's child is perhaps best demonstrated in his more abstract works. The obscurity and ambiguity of the subject matter and images, appearing like dark shadowy shapes partially illuminated by the moonlight, renders them reminiscent of the shifting, unidentifiable forms typically at play in a child's nightmares, and which characterise an environment of fear continuously suffered by the street child, forever faced with shadows and night time apparitions in the pregnant darkness, for "everything which had been hastily stifled was moving and fermenting."<sup>482</sup>

*Silhouette fantastique (Fantastical Silhouette)* (fig. 3.31), whose title alone is suggestive of such menace, depicts a relatively unmodulated black profile of a monster-like character. Created with the aid of his own children's stencils, the work exemplifies the very typical image of fear and danger of an abstruse monster, the sort that might appear before the eyes of a terror-stricken child when the undulating, kaleidoscopic forms of their surroundings merge to concoct what appears to be a

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<sup>480</sup> Paul Ré, review (untitled), *Leonardo*, Vol.16 No.2 (1983), 521.

<sup>481</sup> Jed Rasula, *Modernism and Poetic Inspiration: The Shadow Mouth* (Reston: AIAA, 2009), 10.

<sup>482</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Hapgood, Vol. 4, Book 1, Ch. 4.

foreboding beast. *Taches avec empreintes* (*Stains with fingerprints*) (fig. 3.32) is ambiguous further still. On the one hand, this bizarre work resembles a child's artless finger painting, unstructured and clumsy, with ink splashed across most of the page, yet on the other, we can gauge a variety of darker statements. The work could depict the upward view of a person trapped in a well or other cavernous hole, for example, "comme dans les étangs assoupis sous les bois [...] toutes ses ombres nuées [...] fond morne, affreux, sombre et dormant/où des reptiles noirs fourmillent vaguement", with the white area representing the light of the sky above, and the fingerprints appearing as the obscured faces of curious onlookers peering down at the unfortunate pit-dweller.<sup>483</sup> Perhaps through this artwork, Hugo sought to illustrate the sense suffered by many urchin children of being trapped and enclosed in a dark, lowly and hostile world from which there is no escape, only to be observed and sneered at by those above.

This sentiment is succinctly emblemised by Charles Méryon's (1821-1868) etching *Le Stryge* (*The Strix*) (1853) (fig. 3.33), in which a monstrous stone chimera of Notre Dame cathedral, designed by Viollet-le-Duc during the 1845 restoration, is situated in the immediate foreground of the work, grimacing out upon a lofty view of urban Paris. Little-known outside of France, but hailed amongst his compatriots for his accurate and compelling depictions of nineteenth-century Paris, Méryon too, like Degas and Hugo, was both blessed and plagued by a peculiarity of vision, which, infiltrating his addled mind, informed his artistic symbolism. Afflicted with severe colour-blindness from a young age, Méryon devoted himself to the

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<sup>483</sup> Victor Hugo, "Les Rayons et les Ombres" ("The Beams and the Shadows") in *Œuvres Complètes: Les Feuilles d'automne, Les Chants du crépuscule, Les Voix intérieures, Les Rayons et les Ombres* (Paris: Librairie Paul Ollendorf, 1909), 574. Translation: "As in some stagnant pool by forest-side [...] all its shadows nuanced [...] where gloomy, awful, dark and still/where black reptiles vaguely creep."

monochromic fantasy of etching, but finding money scarce and his passion all-consuming, he suffered hallucinatory episodes and struggled with crippling bouts of mental illness.

Like both Hugo and Degas, Méryon's vision was one both facilitated and limited by his fixation upon black and white, insofar as his sombre preoccupation with society's polarities gave rise to artistic expression which both relied and thrived upon the symbolic interplay of light and dark. These three figures of artistic and literary creation, whilst varied in their individual styles, are united in their capacity to expose and articulate most clearly, through a reduction to just black and white, the very crux of nineteenth-century France's plighted youth, exposing, like an X-ray, in perfect light and dark, the bare bones at the very core of this social carcass. Like Hugo's comparison of the impoverished child to an orphaned chick tipped out of its nest, this carcass is the poor child itself, a frail and "sighing animal, starting its life in torment", whose bright white bones have become increasingly exposed and thus sullied and chapped by society.<sup>484 485</sup>

Méryon's chimera is symbolic of this, hunched over the precipice and grotesquely jeering towards the streets below, an architectural embodiment of the foreboding "dark cloud that hung threatening over the heads of these unsuspecting souls" of childhood poverty.<sup>486</sup> Conflated by the endless hovering and circling of

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<sup>484</sup> Victor Hugo, "Les Chatiments" ("The Punishments") in *Œuvres Complètes : Edition définitive d'après les manuscrits originaux* (Paris: Hetzel-Quantin, 1880-1889), 83-84. "La femelle? elle est morte/Le mâle? un chat l'emporte/Et dévore ses os/Au doux nid qui frissonne/Qui reviendra? Personne/Pauvres petits oiseaux!//L'homme au bain! La mère/à l'hospice! ô misère!/Le logis tremble aux vents/L'humble berceau frissonne/Qui reste-t-il? Personne/Pauvres petits enfants!" Translation: "Mother bird? She is dead/Father bird? A cat did feed/And devour his bones./To the quivering nest/Who will return? No-one./Poor little birds!//Father enslaved! Mother/in the hospice! Oh what misery!/The home in the wind shivers/The humble cradle quivers/Who looks after it now? No-one/Poor little children!"

<sup>485</sup> Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Pierre Riché, *L'enfance au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 22.

<sup>486</sup> C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, (Waukegan: Fontana Press, 1995), 268.

sooty black crows or ravens, these hook-beaked harbingers of doom underpin the strix's mythological roots as a winged beast which preys upon infants and sucks their blood. Like the greed-driven upper and middle classes, this strix bleeds dry its prey. Upon isolation and exploitation of the poor child, the beast at once "finds gold in the street", immediately grasping in its crooked talons that valuable, exploitable glow of youth, before extinguishing it in one fell swoop, its engulfing shadow of evil like a transparent ghost evading capture: "superstitions, bigotries, affected devotion, prejudices, those forms, all forms as they are, are tenacious of life; they have teeth and nails in their smoke, and [...] war must be made on them, and that without truce; for it is one of the fatalities of humanity to be condemned to eternal combat with phantoms."<sup>487</sup> <sup>488</sup>

When Halévy compared Degas, "the painter who became blind [to] Beethoven [...] the musician who became deaf", he remarked upon the symbolic irony that this was the same painter who "opened the eyes of his contemporaries."<sup>489</sup> Whilst there is little tangible evidence to suggest that the artistic and literary work discussed contributed significantly to any sort of official social reform during the time in which it was produced and disseminated, it nevertheless raised awareness amongst contemporary audiences if not contemporaneously of prominent social issues, and thus became an effective reflector of circumstances and concerns surrounding the working class child of the French long-nineteenth century. It is perhaps as a result of their warped vision, afflicted by a mixture of photophobia, (colour) blindness, and depressive disorders, that the figures of Hugo, Degas, and

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<sup>487</sup> Max Liebermann and Adrian Stokes, "Degas", *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts and Industries*, Vol. 28, No. 247 (1900), 114.

<sup>488</sup> Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Hapgood, Vol. 2, Book. 7, Ch. 3.

<sup>489</sup> Halévy, *Pays Parisiens*, 10.

indeed Méryon, removed the artifice of artistic invention and exposed, like their photographic descendant, in the visually simpler though metaphorically more complex medium of light and dark, the extreme bifurcation of modern society and its treatment of the child of poverty. Forced by their own incapacities to help remove the shadowed veil of (wilful) ignorance which was draped over society, these individuals offered a clear and indisputable picture, a statement printed in black and white, of the technicolour palette of ills of which society was awash.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Blinded by the Light: Solace in the Shadows*

“I seemed to see that this life that we live in half-darkness can be illumined, this life that at every moment we distort can be restored to its true pristine shape, that a life, in short, can be realised within the confines of a book!”

Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*<sup>490</sup>

“As a child I sought the shadows; I remember taking singular and profound joy in hiding among the great curtains in dark corners of the house.”

Odilon Redon, *To Myself*<sup>491</sup>

The tight-weaving of one’s life and work has probably few greater examples than writer Marcel Proust and artist Odilon Redon. It is in this way, namely through the imbuing of his magnum opus *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1912-1927) with the convoluted experiences and hazy memories of his infancy and youth, that Proust helped to establish a new literary genre.<sup>492</sup> Threading, as Lorna Martens puts it, “childhood memories in works that straddle the boundary between autobiography and fiction”, Proust’s inter-mingling of recovered memories and invented plots provides for a narrative in which truth and fiction becomes an unfathomable melange.<sup>493</sup> The indeterminable nature of Proust’s genre is as much reflective of his own sense of doubt as it is the reader’s when trying to differentiate between genuine

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<sup>490</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume VII: Time Regained*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 431.

<sup>491</sup> Odilon Redon, *To Myself: Notes on Life, Art, and Artists*, trans. Jacob Mira and Jeanne L. Wasserman, (New York: George Braziller, 1996), 10.

<sup>492</sup> *À la recherche du temps perdu* was originally published volume by volume in France between 1913 and 1927, with the seven volumes appearing thus: *Du côté de chez Swann* in 1913 (whose publication was funded by Proust himself due to constant rejection from editors), *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* in 1919, *Le Côté de Guermantes* in 1921, *Sodome et Gomorrhe* in 1922, *Albertine disparue* in 1925, and *Le Temps retrouvé* in 1927. The text will hereafter be referred to as *Recherche*.

<sup>493</sup> Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory, Childhood Recollection and Its Objects in Literary Modernism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

memories and confounding embellishments: “Combray is so distant that its supposed revival is actually a new creation, from which a resurrected self arises.”<sup>494</sup> It is often the case that “childhood memories [...] compounded of adult nostalgias and anxieties, actual memories, and the writer’s artistic ambitions”, can rarely be relied upon as whole truths, and often exist on paper as mere shadows of past events.<sup>495</sup> This is perhaps especially true of Proust. His particularly dense plait of writing combines his own youthful experiences with collective concepts of childhood. Although his natural sensibility meant he felt even in adulthood a sort of magical affinity with the world of the child, he nevertheless harnessed prevalent myths of childhood by which his own experiences could be explained. Proust’s own infant experiences of fearful like-mindedness with a natural, spiritual world beyond the human one in which he was forced to exist aligned with Jacques Barzun’s attestation that “children are not born human”.<sup>496</sup>

Gilles Deleuze adopted the term ‘apprenticing’ to describe the meshing of Proust’s life and work, functioning as a never-ending bumbling through an obstacle course of signs, without much indication as to what is to be signified.<sup>497</sup> Accordingly, Proust’s text not only functions as a personal revisiting of one’s former years, an attempt to collate and make sense of past markers, but also as an invitation for the reader to do the same. Carol Mavor discerns that Proust wrote “in a manner that relentlessly insists that we be *readers of ourselves*”, in that his seven-volume

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<sup>494</sup> Ronald Bogue, “Difference and Repetition in Deleuze’s Proustian Sign and Time Machine”, *Concentric: Studies in English Literature and Language*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2001), 20. ‘Combray’, taken from the name of the narrator’s childhood town, refers to the very first section of Proust’s first volume, which details experiences of his semi-autobiographical child-narrator’s earliest years.

<sup>495</sup> Martens, *The Promise of Memory*, 19.

<sup>496</sup> Jacques Barzun quoted in Ellen Handler Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood: Portraits in Fiction, Film, and Drama*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011), 172.

<sup>497</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2000), 18-25.



novel is as much a study of all of us as children and adults as it is of himself.<sup>498</sup>

Deleuze's term 'apprenticing' points also, etymologically in the first instance, to the sort of training typically undergone by bourgeois children in this period. Derived from the Old French word 'aprentis', from the verb 'apprendre' (to learn), the term 'apprentice', defined as "a learner of a craft [...] an unskilled novice", very much applies to the role attributed to children of the bourgeois class in the French long-nineteenth century.<sup>499</sup>

In contrast to the previous chapter's focus on the plight of the working class child, this chapter turns its attention to the very personal, though not altogether uncommon, experiences of middle class or bourgeois children. Beginning with a brief exploration of the contextual background of bourgeois family life and approaches to children in the French long-nineteenth century, the chapter is principally dedicated to two concurrent case studies of the lives and works of Marcel Proust (1871-1922) and Odilon Redon (1840-1916). Contrary to the negativity associated with the child's 'shadowland' environment as investigated in Chapter Two, this chapter instead seeks to explore the solace found in various artistic and literary manifestations of shadowy havens as symbolic of the creative liberty and ultimate comfort of the dark womb of which these two figures' childhood experiences leave them forever wanting.

Relinquishing the longstanding beliefs rooted in the medieval and early modern era that children were simply "miniature adults", perhaps in itself pointing to an age-old predication of the inclination of the large to control the small, for "the

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<sup>498</sup> Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 317.

<sup>499</sup> "Apprentice", 'OED – Oxford English Dictionary', <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9815?rskey=VKkm3a&result=1#eid> (accessed 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

appeal of [the] diminutive [...] begins with its capacity for instilling a feeling of omnipotence in the viewer”, the bourgeois class of nineteenth-century France has been credited by both Philippe Ariès and Mark Poster as having given birth to the modern family, and by extension, the concept of the child as an entity in its own right.<sup>500 501</sup> Far from just a ready-made adult on a small scale, “it was recognised that the child was not ready for life, and that he had to be subjected to a special treatment, a sort of quarantine, before he was allowed to join the adults”, especially if he was going to fulfil his ultimate purpose: to develop into an adult capable of flourishing in a newly productive and unforgiving modern world.<sup>502</sup> Whilst the vigorous “industrialisation of society may have contributed to the strictness of discipline” applied to these apprentice adults, subjecting them to a sort of mechanical whittling akin to the orderly functioning of a factory loom, it was as much an adaptation of ‘Rousseauian’ logic amounting to a system whereby “every step in the child’s development seems to depend on the development of what people call its *raison* [...] the child is now considered to be *raisonnable* and it expected to remain *raisonnable*.”<sup>503 504</sup>

Far from simply being swaddled and indulged, the new role of the bourgeois child was that of the apprentice undergoing a particularly attentive training programme which sought to “safeguard [childhood] against pollution by life, [...]

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<sup>500</sup> Pollock, Linda A. in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), xv.

<sup>501</sup> Ralph Rugoff, *The Eye of the Needle: The Unique World of Micro-Miniatures of Hagop Sandaldjian* (Los Angeles: Museum of Jurassic Technology and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Information, 1996), 31.

<sup>502</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Johnathan Cape Ltd, 1962), 412.

<sup>503</sup> Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-child relations from 1500-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 269.

<sup>504</sup> L. Wylie quoted in Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 118.

and strengthen it by developing character and reason.”<sup>505</sup> This rigorous apprenticeship programme was offset by a similarly intense application of (usually) motherly affection, developing a new depth of emotional attachment between mother and child, forging a parent-child bond so profound that “the child’s inner life could be shaped to moral perfection [by this] novel form of maternal love”.<sup>506</sup> In other words, care and fondness served as a sort of lubricating oil in the unfettered cog rotation of the bourgeois family machine, an enabling reward by which the necessary apprenticeship of bourgeois society may be more easily undertaken by its children. In this way, we can understand Deleuze’s ‘apprenticing’ as not only etymologically suggestive of this bourgeois practice, but also providing a symbolic link between the idea of Proust’s writing and the child’s development; that is to say, both constitute a confusing and seemingly endless meandering through signs and stages with little indication of the signified end result.

The complexity of such can, quite paradoxically, be elucidated to us by a deeper burrowing into the tight folds of bourgeois society. Whilst peer surveillance and competition was commonplace, socialising beyond the four walls of the family home existed strictly amongst adult members of society. This suffocating family enclosure meant that young children often experienced no interaction beyond family and nannies, at least until school age. Firm in their belief of devolution from state to individual household, according to the bourgeois, “the family was a private micro-world, a sanctum into whose hallowed chambers no outsider had right of entry.”<sup>507</sup> Accordingly, the family environment became for the child a sort of *mise en abyme*

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<sup>505</sup> Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 119.

<sup>506</sup> Mark Poster, *Critical Theory of the Family*, (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1988), 170.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

for bourgeois society as a whole; a world within a world, a house within a house, an enclosure within an enclosure.

It is via this never-ending pathway of ‘within’ that we return to Proust, as the writer himself constantly does, adopting what Joseph Litvak calls a “narrativising hindsight [that] insists preposterously on going back and staying back, dwelling on, and in” every possible detail.<sup>508</sup> Proust’s text, inextricably entangled amongst the knotted and fraying threads of his life, can never be unravelled into neat skeins: “I perceived that life all this while had been weaving round person or thing a tissue of diverse threads which ended by covering them with the beautiful and inimitable velvety patina of the years.”<sup>509</sup> Proust did not know how to do things simply, or how to do simple things. For example, despite, as Mavor points out, having spent the majority of his life in bed, he did not even know how to make one: “When I got into the guest room I found the bed hadn’t been made up – there was just a pile of sheets and blankets. I was annoyed because I had never made a bed, and I got myself all entangled with the sheets. I ended up sleeping on the bare mattress.”<sup>510 511</sup> As in the bedclothes that most frequently formed his sanctum, Proust snarled himself up amongst the layers of life and work, autobiography and fiction, critique and philosophy.

The exasperation we glean from his inability to straighten things out, to make the bed and make his point, is reflected in his convoluted sentence structure, as Julia Kristeva explains: “Unlike linear time, the [Proustian] sentence reproduces a

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<sup>508</sup> Joseph Litvak, “Taste, Waste, Proust” in *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 108.

<sup>509</sup> Proust, *Time Regained*, 354.

<sup>510</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 310.

<sup>511</sup> Marcel Proust quoted in Céleste Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, trans. Barbara Bray, (New York : New York Review of Books, 2003), 148.

giant breath through explanatory detours or backwards leaps that develop traces that had already been constructed, erased, and not absorbed. The chronological progression, broken up and superimposed onto itself, can thus stretch out a space – the architectures, the always already anterior texture of a sort of timelessness.”<sup>512</sup> These extremely long, twisting sentences provide the reader with a sense of breathlessness akin to that suffered by the asthma-riddled author; we too struggle to catch air as we meander through the paragraph-sentences, our lungs and minds cluttered with retrospective corrections, doubts and returns. Whilst it is true that Proust’s writing was facilitated by his invalid state, by the cocoon of affliction in which he spun himself, it was also evident in his writing itself, not least in the hurried, self-questioning way in which his frail body struggled to sensibly pour out his addled mind’s ruminations, his original manuscripts consisting of tiny concertinas of folded additions, each covered with miniscule scrawling afterthoughts.<sup>513</sup>

Proust’s realisation in the novel of Henri Bergson’s theory of *durée*, the subjective experience of time which transcends clockwork time as we know it, is a well-trodden topic in the scholarly world. To read Proust is to be absorbed into a topsy-turvy world, to be caught in a stop-clock motion which randomly resets, as the author himself considers: “Have we not often seen [...] in a single minute of the night, remote periods, relegated to those enormous distances at which we can no longer distinguish anything of the sentiments which we felt in them, come rushing upon us with almost the speed of light [...] only, once we are awake, to resume their

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<sup>512</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*, trans. Ross Guberman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 304.

<sup>513</sup> Whilst Proust suffered from a particularly acute form of asthma (he eventually died from related pulmonary afflictions), his family’s inclination to molly-coddle him and treat him as a ‘sickly child’ exacerbated the problem, cementing a lifelong habit of bed-bound convalescence.

position on the far side of the gulf which they had miraculously traversed?”<sup>514</sup>

Furthermore, Proust’s writing becomes what Mavor terms as “touristic”, a moseying perambulation of many layers, physical, mental, geographical and transitory, rendering the writer and reader alike a unique sort of “Baudelarian armchair traveller, moving spatially and temporally”.<sup>515</sup> This notion becomes particularly poignant when we consider Proust’s thoughts on the peculiarity of falling asleep in an unexpected or unusual place, “sitting in an armchair, for instance, after dinner: then the world will go hurtling out of orbit, the magic chair will carry him at full speed through time and space, and when he opens his eyes again he will imagine that he went to sleep months earlier in another place.”<sup>516</sup>

Considering the severity of such a displacement, temporal, spatial and even psychological, to such an extent that the narrator-author felt he had “awoke[n] in different weather beneath another clime”, it is as though Proust’s long thread of narrative works in the same way that string does for one of paediatrician and psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott’s patients.<sup>517</sup> This little boy, whose preoccupation with string had led him to habitually join various pieces of furniture together, was in this way dealing with a fear of separation in light of a growing family and thus reduced attention from his mother, “attempting to deny separation by his use of string, as one would deny separation from a friend using the telephone.”<sup>518</sup>

Similarly, conscious of his frequent liability to drift away in sleep or in the depths of creative focus, separated from reality or the beginning by streams and knots of

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<sup>514</sup> Proust, *Time Regained*, 274-275.

<sup>515</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 350, 112.

<sup>516</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume I: Swann’s Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 4.

<sup>517</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume V: The Captive*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 85.

<sup>518</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 23.

storytelling, Proust weaves a never-ending narrative thread which allows him to retrace his thoughts. Just as children in fairytales leave a trail of crumbs to find their way back home, or climbers may use rope to easily find their exit from a cave, Proust's narrative thread ensures he does not become lost. As an extension of other techniques of communication, "string joins, just as it also helps in the [...] holding of unintegrated material", such as one of the writer's ideas to another.<sup>519</sup> This becomes particularly important when we consider that Proust's search is for lost time, and that according to Deleuze, "Lost Time is not simply 'time past'; it is also time wasted, lost track of" until we find what we seek; the revelation of that lost time.<sup>520</sup>

Furthermore, the necessity of a woven, flowing, and tactile linkage becomes all the more pressing when we consider the principle theme at large; darkness. Being that it is in the complex, shadowy confines of his bedroom, and the even darker folds of his sleeping memory and inky dreams, that Proust's semi-autobiographical narrator found most of his creative inspiration, it is unsurprising that he and his art were as equally reliant upon a plotted trail by which to find his way as he was upon the very nature of the environment which made it so unnavigable. As Proust himself declared, "what one has meant to do during the day, one accomplishes only in one's dreams."<sup>521</sup> Nocturnal hours prove most imaginative and productive for both Proust and his child narrator, not only due to "dreams [...] making up for lack of duration by their potency", but also as a result of the confusion innate to darkness, which, muffling more external senses, serves to enhance one's awareness on a more internal

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<sup>519</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 25.

<sup>520</sup> Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 3.

<sup>521</sup> Marcel Proust quoted in W.L. Werner, "The Psychology of Marcel Proust", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1931): 277.

level.<sup>522</sup> Without the luxury of full and clear vision facilitated by light, our thoughts and sense of perception no longer follow a linear path, and “this ordered procession is apt to grow confused”, meandering with the pattern of a swirling thread of memory and imagination, which “being like a barrel-organ out of order, [...] always plays some other tune than that shown on its card.”<sup>523 524</sup>

Walter Benjamin once said that “the Latin word *textum* means ‘web’ [...] and no one’s text is more tightly woven than Marcel Proust’s; to him, nothing was tight or durable enough”.<sup>525</sup> This offers some insight into the value of the darkness of an insulating sanctum for Proust, and indeed Redon, such is their urgency to maintain an environment whose impermeability both permits no outsider’s entrance of light or interference, and forbids the leakage of any vital sources of inspiration. Therein lies the paradoxical crux of the relationship of Proust (and his child narrator) and Redon with their shadowy existences; it is the very sense of confusion, insecurity and even fear innate to darkness that requires a level of contemplation, exploration and absorption, mental and otherwise, for it is the “hard work in the darkroom of the mind” which ultimately offers both comfort and creative release.<sup>526</sup>

Such an existence and such behaviour was facilitated and exacerbated by the aforementioned arrangements peculiar to the bourgeois family. The *mise en abyme* condition of this ‘behind-closed-doors’ composition of the home constructed for the child a rather complex comprehension of the world, creating a claustrophobic flux by which they would be transported, as E.H. Erikson puts it, “from a hostile

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<sup>522</sup> Proust, *Time Regained*, 274.

<sup>523</sup> Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 3.

<sup>524</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume III: The Guermantes Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 40.

<sup>525</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 202.

<sup>526</sup> Martens, *Promise of Memory*, 60.



innerworld, to an inner outerworld.”<sup>527</sup> Ergo, a highly-pressured and private family life produced a child whose adulthood years would be characterised by a combination of a peculiarly secluded social circle and similarly cloistered state of mind. It is from this environment, both physical and mental, which a particularly exacting and unforgiving upbringing developed a child whose sense of introversion was so acute that his passage into adulthood would prove plagued by anxiety, self-deprecation, and a tendency to shy away from even the briefest exposure to the smallest chinks of light of the external world: “the child [...] lives at the point of impact between the world of innocent awareness and the world of man’s insensitivity to man.”<sup>528</sup>

The acuteness of such inwardness within Proust, his child narrator, and Redon was exacerbated in no small part by their relationship with their mothers. Being that the new bourgeois teachings prescribed a model for motherhood that expected women to not only ensure the physical survival of their children, but also equip them for a respectable and successful place in society, it is scarcely surprising that such an intense relationship exacerbated the child’s sense of dependency, especially if the child is already of a sensitive disposition. Such an attachment proved commonplace amongst creative individuals like Proust and Redon, with “nineteenth century artists’ biographies invariably plac[ing] a graceful, nurturing mother” at their heart, as well as such a figure frequently seeping into their artistic and literary output.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, (New York: Vintage Publishing, 1995), 270.

<sup>528</sup> Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 112.

<sup>529</sup> Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, “Family matters: the construction of childhood in nineteenth-century artists’ biographies” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 62.

Whilst bourgeois parents were determined that their children should not undergo a maturing process akin to being “plunged from childhood to adulthood as if through a chute”, this is effectively what happened.<sup>530</sup> Despite mothers’ best efforts, child-rearing and training on such an unprecedented scale of parental involvement was something of an “anthropological no-man’s-land” at this time.<sup>531</sup> To negotiate this confusing, unplumbed terrain would prove problematic for mother and child alike. Such was the privacy of bourgeois society that mothers found themselves increasingly isolated and without a community of support from which to draw guidance on this new and burdensome role which had been flung upon them. Such apprehension transferred into the child as if through a symbolic umbilical cord from mother to infant, to such a degree that “their anxieties fed on each other, forming an inextricable knot.”<sup>532</sup> And so we return to Proust’s string, which, beyond that of the narrative thread, becomes symbolic in its notion of the never-ending link between mother and child, as felt by himself and his child narrator. Whilst such a close bond could result in “an emotional pooling which may multiply well-being in both [it also could] endanger both partners when the communication becomes jammed and weakened”, when the threads of the connective cord become taut and frayed, or tangled and knotted beyond unravelling.<sup>533</sup>

We may ask ourselves, then, what happens when such a bond is thus damaged or destroyed. How does this important emotional and communicative breakdown manifest itself, most particularly in the child? Indeed, for “a drastic loss of accustomed mother-love without proper substitution at this time can lead [...] to

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<sup>530</sup> Martens, *Promise of Memory*, 102

<sup>531</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 99.

<sup>532</sup> Evelyne, Bloch-Dano, *Madame Proust: A Biography*, trans. Alice Kaplan, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 62.

<sup>533</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 187.

acute infantile depression”.<sup>534</sup> Martens has remarked upon the capacity of “childhood experiences [to] indelibly stamp the adult spirit.”<sup>535</sup> In other words, such intensity of feeling and emotional turbulence during one’s childhood, such acute “anxiety concerning the difficult digestion of elements that [they had] to assimilate”, can often account for insurmountable psychological issues in later years.<sup>536</sup>

It may seem difficult to accept that a social class so occupied with taking an obsessively diligent approach to their children’s upbringings could succumb to an attitude of neglect or rejection. Yet we must remind ourselves of the paramount motive behind bourgeois parenting techniques; sculpting a human who is prepared to succeed in the modern adult world and worthy of representing the family. Therefore, a quiet, sickly or unusual child, “isolated from his peer group, not listened to or understood for what he was, not given any useful or formative instruction, and laden with inappropriate expectations” is left feeling like a disappointing embarrassment to his parents.<sup>537</sup> As playwright Molière declared, “the infant who was too fragile [...] to take part in the life of adults simply did not count”.<sup>538</sup> The existence of “an unwanted child in a ‘superior’ household” is unlikely to ever produce a thoroughly happy adult, but couple this situation with a particularly sensitive child with a peculiarity of spirit and interests in comparison to his peers, and the unsurprising result is one which creates a fearful and confused adult whose existence is one ridden with anxiety and depression; “for an intelligent

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<sup>534</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 69.

<sup>535</sup> Martens, *Promise of Memory*, 3.

<sup>536</sup> Claude Gandelman, “The Artist as ‘Traumarbeiter’: On Sketches of Dreams by Marcel Proust”, *Yale French Studies*, No. 84 (1994), 130.

<sup>537</sup> Martens, *Promise of Memory*, 107.

<sup>538</sup> Molière quoted in Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 128.

and imaginative child to have affection and sympathy unaccountably withdrawn will cause a trauma from which he will suffer throughout his life”.<sup>539</sup>

Such a trauma, born of the bereavement of an absent mother, lies at the very heart of this chapter’s focus. For both Proust (and his semi-autobiographical child-narrator, Marcel, who with some degree of trepidation we find ourselves considering as synonymous with the author) and Redon, it is the withdrawal of familial support and interaction, especially that of the mother, which not only forces them inwards to themselves, but also towards a dark and shadowy sanctum which offered solace from the harshly bright extremities of the outside world. For these two figures, the “umbilical scar always pulls at the lost mother”; the source of pain, the ongoing irritation of a lifelong scar boring into one’s centre is that of the tangible connection between mother and child, the physical manifestation of a more symbolic maternal lifeline which has been forever severed.<sup>540</sup>

Such a profound attachment to the mother on a symbolically uterine level has been explored by both Evelyne Bloch-Dano and Mavor in relation to Proust. Whilst the former has remarked upon the author’s apparent “inability to *exist* outside of his mother”, Mavor’s analysis of prominent sons’ relationships with their mothers extends to an understanding of such an attachment as a “covet[ing] [of] the mother’s body as a home both lost and never lost, to desire her as only a son can, as only a body that longs for her, but will never become Mother, can.”<sup>541</sup> <sup>542</sup> Although physically removed from the womb’s sanctum, the finality of the cut umbilical cord cementing this, the symbolic join remains, albeit strained, tangled or hidden, and

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<sup>539</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 106, 118.

<sup>540</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 150.

<sup>541</sup> Bloch-Dano, *Madame Proust* 111.

<sup>542</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 32.

continues to serve as a painful reminder of the thread-like pathway back to the maternal safe haven of the uterus, to which they feel they belong but will never gain access.

It is pertinent at this stage to provide some detail of the childhood experiences relating to the concept of ‘Mother’ of both Redon, Proust, and his semi-autobiographical narrator, Marcel. Proust’s early years growing up in a comfortable middle-class family were complicated, mainly due to his debilitating bouts of illness, specifically asthma, which prescribed a childhood often confined to the indoors, if not the bed. This insular and limiting lifestyle proved the root of the severity of his attachment to his mother, and permeated the depicted experiences of the child narrator. The child narrator’s desperate yearning for maternal attention is most famously reflected in the acute anxiety he feels at bedtime. Referred to as his *drame de coucher*, Marcel is afflicted with attacks of anxiety when trying to go to sleep at night unless pacified by the soothing comfort of his mother’s goodnight kiss: “my sole consolation [...] was that Mamma would come in and kiss me after I was in bed”.<sup>543</sup>

The psychoanalytical scholarship of Melanie Klein established general sleeplessness, and more specifically night terrors, as common amongst children, especially those of a more sensitive disposition, explaining that “children and young people suffer from a more acute degree of anxiety than do adults.”<sup>544</sup> The comparative maturity of an adult to allow for a more logical approach to troubles contrasts starkly with that of the sensitive child, who is more likely to find

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<sup>543</sup> Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 12. “Drame de coucher” translates literally from the French to mean “the sleep drama”.

<sup>544</sup> Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1960), 37.

himself/herself emotionally trapped by a situation for which they have not the experience or understanding to combat effectively: “an adult sees through and around his predicament. To the child, despair is a total experience”.<sup>545</sup> Klein’s theory is exemplified in Proust’s text. Not only is the child Marcel unusually sensitive to any potential peculiarities in his routine and surroundings, but adults seem especially numb to his anguish, operating, perhaps quite typically of their class, in what Peter Coveney terms a “psychological void”, rather anaesthetised to emotional matters in general.<sup>546</sup> Initially, this is characterised in Marcel’s father’s traditionally stoic treatment of his young son’s sensitivity, his abrasive bourgeois patriarchy evident in his irritation at his son’s reticence to maternal separation. However, more revealing are the blinkered efforts made by his family to remedy his perceived fear of the dark during his *drame de coucher*, which will be further explored later in the chapter.

As an artist, Redon is most commonly associated with the Symbolists, and whilst in general their “deep-seated pessimism derived [...] from a rejection of the world”, the depth of Redon’s determination to reject the world is testament to the intensity of the melancholy he suffered at the hands of his family.<sup>547</sup> Born into a comfortable middle class household, Redon’s naturally “melancholic, introspective personality” left him enormously wanting in his parents’ eyes, who plainly preferred his more outgoing and traditionally successful brother Gaston.<sup>548</sup> A source of confusion and embarrassment for his family, Redon was abandoned in infancy and sent to live alongside a distant relation on the remote and dilapidated country estate

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<sup>545</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 118.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>547</sup> Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists*, (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1977), 19.

<sup>548</sup> Lynn Gamwell, “Beyond the Visible: Microscopy, Nature and Art”, *Science*, Vol. 299 (2003), 49.

of Peyrelebadé, in the wilderness of the Médoc: “I was sent to nurse in the country, in a place which had a great influence on my childhood, my youth, and my entire life”.<sup>549</sup> Said to have “felt the pain of this family exile for his whole life”, Redon was forced, in the absence of familial love, to immerse himself in the rural culture and natural world surrounding him, allowing this alternative connection to living things to imprint permanently upon his soul and artwork.<sup>550</sup>

Consequently, Redon’s childhood was one chiefly characterised by loneliness and self-deprecation, exacerbating an already well-established sense of scrupulous inward analysis and sensitivity. Just like Proust and his child narrator, although Redon’s frailty was in part due to a sickly constitution, his depression resulted principally from the belief that he was something of a misfit and had let his family down, meaning that “his solitude and introspection, therefore, were stoic rejoinders to parental oppression”.<sup>551</sup> This notion of oppression, as such, is not something we might immediately associate with Proust and his child narrator’s maternal relationships given the warmth that seems to thrive between the two.

However, Edmund White’s biography on the author provides some insight into the lasting and weighing effects of his maternal reliance. Not only impactful upon his adult relationships, but it coloured his entire outlook on his worldly role. Reflected in his adult narrator’s attachment, in the absence now of his mother’s, to his lover Albertine’s goodnight kiss, without which he was left “so anxious [...] with a throbbing heart”, Proust’s fixation with his mother became a model for other relationships, for “not only did Proust not outgrow his dependence, it became the

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<sup>549</sup> Odilon Redon “To Myself” in Stephen Eisenman, *The Temptation of Saint Redon: Biology, Ideology and Style in the Noirs*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 10.

<sup>550</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 10.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

template for his adult loves, since for Proust passion was a nagging need that became only more demanding the more it was denied.”<sup>552 553</sup>

Infantilism was at Proust’s very core, his attachment to being his mother’s little boy refusing to allow him to mature to such an extent that he continued in adulthood to sign his letters to his mother “your child Marcel.”<sup>554</sup> In this vein, White’s reading of Proust’s famous statement “in dying, Maman took with her her little Marcel” suggests that “the sentence can be interpreted, if the emphasis is placed on ‘little’, to mean that the ineffectual, dandified, immature Marcel died at her death, to be reborn as the determined, wise ascetic Proust” who produced literature of such sophistication and significance.<sup>555 556</sup> However, the extent to which this can be deemed true remains dubious given the weight of maternal influences in Proust’s magnum opus.

Similarly, Redon’s lifelong yearning for the mother figure he was denied at such a young age not only permeates his *oeuvre*, but is reflected poignantly in his choice to adopt a name taken from his mother’s nickname for him. Born Bertrand-Jean, Redon’s moniker ‘Odilon’, coined by his mother and derived from her own name, Marie-Odile, is an indicator in itself of the artist’s attachment to times when evidence of affection between the two existed.<sup>557</sup> In the same way that Proust will always be his mother’s ‘little Marcel’, Redon will too always be his mother’s ‘little

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<sup>552</sup> Proust, *The Captive*, 120.

<sup>553</sup> Edmund White, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 17.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>555</sup> Marcel Proust quoted in White, *Marcel Proust*, 89.

<sup>556</sup> White, *Proust*, 89.

<sup>557</sup> Russell T. Clement, *Four French Symbolists: A Sourcebook on Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon and Maurice Denis*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996, 220.



Odilon', literally formed from her identity, herself. It seems difficult to view Proust and Redon as anything other than what Benjamin termed "that aged child."<sup>558</sup>

These biographical anecdotes not only offer an informative backdrop to the personal backgrounds of these two figures, but also help reinforce the assertion that "the boundaries between art and writing, or between autobiography and literary fiction, are never very clear."<sup>559</sup> For both Proust and Redon, their lives and works interlock with a tightness impossible to prise apart. Whilst in the case of Proust, he meticulously "made use of everything he experienced or thought about during his lifetime", Redon's "satanic *noirs* act as a rejoinder to the solitude imposed on the artist by his family", for its inspiration was found as a result of their banishing him, both in exacerbating his melancholy towards the world, and in its provision of a natural landscape overflowing with cavernous comfort and artistic stimuli.<sup>560 561</sup>

What also unites these two figures, the analysis of which will form the bulk of the rest of this chapter, is their search for solace in shadows and in the darkness as a remedy for their separation from Mother, a yearning which becomes apparent in the uterine imagery of their artistic and literary vision. It is perhaps unsurprising that two individuals whose upbringings were characterised by an understanding of childhood described by Mavor as "innocent and pure, walled off from adult life (like a child's bedroom in the middle-class or bourgeois home, even the home itself)" took most comfort in the absence of maternal security to reclaim or manufacture a safe haven akin to that in which they resided alongside Mother for so long.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 213.

<sup>559</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 186.

<sup>560</sup> Jean Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, trans. Euan Cameron, (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 2001): xvi.

<sup>561</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 79.

<sup>562</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 78.

Having only ever previously been exposed to a “somewhat anaemic reality, [a] secluded life within four walls” as per the structures of their family and society, it is no surprise that in the face of difficulty, we find Proust and Redon’s works to be depictive of a return, nostalgic or therapeutic, to a uterine home, a dark and comforting sanctum into which no interference from the outside shall be permitted.<sup>563</sup> For Proust and Redon, and indeed all of us, our mother was our first and forever home: “I say Mother. And my thoughts are of you, oh, House. House of the lovely dark summers of my childhood.”<sup>564</sup>

Proust’s womb, and that of his child narrator, is first and foremost the bed, but can be extended to the bedroom as a whole. Whilst the bed is probably primarily considered a place of sleep, the significance of which (especially in relation to dreams) has already been discussed, the bed became far more for Proust, and in turn his narrator, child and otherwise. Proust’s bed was his entire environment; often bound to it as a ‘sickbed’, its comforting folds became his accustomed place of refuge in which he produced his most successful writing. Functioning nocturnally, “Proust wrote most of the ‘Search’ by turning night into day and day into night, fairy-tale style.”<sup>565</sup> He slept throughout most daylight hours only to feel himself and his creative mind wake up with the onset of dusk, upon which he would begin putting pen to paper again, his brain filled with the visions of his dreams, and “from

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<sup>563</sup> G.G. Pospelov, “Larionov and Children’s Drawing” in *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism*, ed. Jonathan Fineberg, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 51.

<sup>564</sup> Oscar Milosz quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 45.

<sup>565</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 386.

the honeycombs of memory he built a house for the swarm of his thoughts” without so much as moving an inch from his bed.<sup>566</sup>

In his short essay of 1925 *A Note Upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’*, Freud made a connection between this child’s toy and the functionality of memory and the unconscious, and it is as though Proust’s dreams, thoughts and memories make their way from his dreams to this temporary platform of the mystic writing pad of the unconscious, before being laid out in ink on paper when he wakes up.<sup>567</sup> In other words, the appearance and disappearance of the writing on Freud’s mystic writing pad is analogous to “the flickering-up and passing-away of consciousness in the process of perception” which is undergone by Proust in the creative processes of his own mystic sort of writing which eventually pours out in tiny inky scribbles.<sup>568</sup> Freud’s analogy ties in with his general assertions on the importance of play with regards to creative practice.<sup>569</sup> Therein lies a connection between the notion of toys and child’s play and Proust’s creative writing, his ‘work’ in adulthood still affected by and thriving on an intrinsically childish practice.

The bed is as much a symbol of Proust’s memory and imagination as it is its home. Peter Stallybrass declared that “wrinkles [...] were called ‘memories’”, and

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<sup>566</sup> Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 203.

<sup>567</sup> Mystic writing pads are children’s toys consisting of a thin sheet of clear plastic laid on top of a thick waxen board. The child then ‘writes’ on the plastic with any sort of pointed stylus, which presses through the plastic sheet and makes a faint indentation in the wax underneath, appearing as a dark trace when viewed through the plastic. When the plastic sheet is lifted away, the dark trace disappears and the pad is ‘mystically’ clean again. Freud used this image to illuminate the workings of the psyche, which, like the plastic of the mystic pad, can record endless amounts of information whilst remaining ‘clean’ and ‘new’, but like the waxen surface, retains a faint trace perceptible upon closer inspection. Freud saw this as similar to the relationship between consciousness and memory.

<sup>568</sup> Sigmund Freud, “A Note Upon the ‘Mystic Writing-Pad’ in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, Vol. 19 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), 230.

<sup>569</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, Vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), 59-106.

whilst we might initially infer this to mean the wrinkles of our face, or more specifically in Stallybrass' text, those wrinkles which cling like memories to our worn clothes, wrinkles can be equally attributed to the endless folds of the bedclothes which house in their dark crevices and billowing undulations Proust's weave of memories and imagination.<sup>570</sup> Proust's bed is, in this way, a sort of nest, a rounded snug, a uterine "cloak of oblivion."<sup>571</sup> His womb-like "dwelling place which [he] had built up for [him]self in the darkness" like a nest whose twigs and moss and bracken is replaced by layer upon layer of memories, dreams and imaginings, becomes a place in which his creativity can thrive but also not escape or be polluted.<sup>572</sup> As Mavor declares, "Proust's nest of supra-insulation is the underground nest of the sea swallow writ large: it is a dark place, a 'darkroom'", in which his memories, dreams and thoughts can be developed, like a photograph, from a single moment shot in a flash of brilliance to a rich and magical story forever preserved as picture or text.<sup>573</sup>

Proust's uterine retreat is as much a place of creative abundance as it is of maternal solace. As Brassai discerns, Proust is laden with "images he had managed to wrest from light [which need] a dark place in order to bring them to visibility, [a place] withdrawn from the world in order to more vividly relive [them]."<sup>574</sup> It is in this dark and private tabernacle of bedsheets that Proust feels safest, and thus where his mind is able to work at its fullest capacity. The writer and his child narrator

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<sup>570</sup> Peter Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat", in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer, (London: Routledge, 1998), 196.

<sup>571</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume IV: Sodom and Gomorrah*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 440.

<sup>572</sup> Proust, *Swann's Way*, 224.

<sup>573</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 301.

<sup>574</sup> Brassai, *Proust in the Power of Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), 140.

prepare this environment, structuring an extra-uterine womb from the bedtime environment: “once in my room I had to stop every loophole, to close the shutters, to dig my own grave as I turned down the bedclothes, to wrap myself in the shroud of my nightshirt.”<sup>575</sup>

Yet it is evident from this very description, the morbidity attached to his cloak of shadows, that this created environment becomes a physical manifestation of the internal workings of the child and his childish adult writer, an “inner world that can be rich or poor and can be at peace or in a state of war”.<sup>576</sup> Like the shapes of words taking their forms from the inky blackness of Proust’s womb-bed from which they have been distilled, his textual outpourings are as much an expression as a comfort, simultaneously a nostalgic U-turn to the uterus and the anxiety-ridden “account of a child, conveyed from within its consciousness”, an unfolding of all “our past joys, all our sorrows [which] are perpetually in our possession, for the most time in an unknown region [and which prove] our unconscious is then more clairvoyant than we ourselves.”<sup>577 578</sup> In other words, the uterine quality of Proust’s bed is as troubling as it is comforting, for not only is it a constant reminder of its own artificiality in contrast with the real, coveted sanctum, but it is also home to the psychological tribulations to which the child narrator’s mind is subject in both a quest for literary autonomy as an adult, as well as the efforts of “the child’s psyche, claustrophobic, contained, gazing out upon the mysteries of adult life.”<sup>579</sup>

It is perhaps in an effort to both engage with and battle against such an environment, especially with the added layer of retrospect with which Proust the

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<sup>575</sup> Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 31.

<sup>576</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 3.

<sup>577</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 105.

<sup>578</sup> Marcel Proust quoted in Werner, “Psychology”, 277

<sup>579</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 198.

adult writer surveyed his past, that the author expanded his womb to comprise his bedroom as a whole, blowing, as he did in his writing, the tiny and intricate into the enormous and all-encompassing, practising his “own strategy of turning a crumb into a universe.”<sup>580</sup> Proust as an adult famously covered his bedroom walls in cork. Whilst this was a popular style of the period, for Proust it proved far more than a mere fashion statement. The spongy, sequestering quality of the cork formed “a placenta-like inner lining” to insulate him in his single, sealed room from the noisy interference from the outer world.<sup>581</sup> Being that he felt that “most of our attempts to translate our innermost feelings do no more than relieve us of them by drawing them out in a blurred form which does not help to identify them”, perhaps Proust believed that his womb space would benefit from some sort of outward stretching, expanding its capacity for contemplation whilst remaining sealed off from the outside world proper.<sup>582</sup>

In much the same way that Proust’s narrative grows and coils and tangles like an endless thread of thought which needs straightening, the space in which his dreams, thoughts and memories circulate, the mind beyond the mind, womb beyond the womb, needs to offer ample space for such an amalgamation to separate and be understood. As Proust noted, “all these memories, superimposed upon one another, now formed a single mass, but had not so far coalesced that I could discern between them – between my oldest, my instinctive memories, and those others, inspired more recently by a taste or ‘perfume,’ and finally those which were actually the memories

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<sup>580</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 18.

<sup>581</sup> Diana Fuss, *The Sense of the Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 152.

<sup>582</sup> Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 185.

of another person from whom I had acquired them at second hand.”<sup>583</sup> It is as though, swaddled and entwined in the cocoon of his bedclothes, Proust stumbles into the extending darkness of his bedroom, and in bumbling around in the opacity, searching for a thread by which to find his way, he “followed the stream of memory back towards its source”, gradually disentangling himself from the sheets and his knotted thoughts until he emerges from his bedsheet cocoon, creatively inspired and free of psychological fetters, as what Henri Lartigue terms “Proust the big butterfly of night”.<sup>584 585</sup>

The extent to which Proust as an adult, reflected through his child narrator, felt as though he had mastered this absorbance of the bedroom into the self is perhaps made clearest when it is threatened most. In *Recherche*, the introduction of the magic lantern to the child narrator’s bedroom at Combray is the adults’ response to the child’s *drame de coucher*, assuming his anxieties are rooted in a typical fear of the dark. The magic lantern, a lamp around which moving slides are fitted, projecting coloured, dancing shapes and characters about a dark room so as to depict fairytales or folkloric legends, was installed in Marcel’s room in a bid to cure him. His parents’ ignorance as to the root of his woes not only highlights their parental failings, but in fact exacerbates the problem, for this colourful kinesis distorts the child’s impression of his room, ruining the familiarity he had established:

“... Someone had indeed had the happy idea of giving me, to distract me on evenings when I seemed abnormally wretched, a magic lantern, which

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<sup>583</sup> Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 223.

<sup>584</sup> Proust, *Time Regained*, 350.

<sup>585</sup> Henri Lartigue quoted in Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 289.

used to be sat on top of my lamp while we waited for dinner-time to come; and, after the fashion of the master-builders and glass-painters of Gothic days, it substituted for the opaqueness of my walls an impalpable iridescence, supernatural phenomena of many colours, in which legends were depicted as on a shifting and transitory window. But my sorrows were only increased thereby, because this mere change of lighting was enough to destroy the familiar impression I had of my room, thanks to which, save for the torture of going to bed, it had become quite endurable. Now I no longer recognised it, and felt uneasy in it, as in a room in some hotel or chalet, in a place where I had just arrived by train for the first time”.<sup>586</sup>

Presented with this warped version of his sanctum, a sanctum to which he had dedicated so much time and effort to render it a mere extension of himself and the maternal home, the child narrator is now forced to deal with a new environment: “I cannot express the discomfort I felt at this intrusion of mystery and beauty into a room which I had succeeded in filling with my own personality until I thought no more of it than of myself [...] The anaesthetic effect of habit being destroyed, I would begin to think –and to feel –such melancholy things.”<sup>587</sup> Instead of the shadowy haven of comfort and contemplation, this intrusion of colour, light and movement to the previous dark calmness threatened to impose a regime whereby “[his] bedroom became the fixed point of which [his] melancholy and anxious thoughts were centred.”<sup>588</sup> Like the narrative thread to which we cling being

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<sup>586</sup> Proust, *Swann's Way*, 8.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.



wrenched away from our grasp, and without the familiarity of the dark shapes to which we are comfortingly accustomed to guide and soothe us, the light of the magic lantern proves blindingly bright, driving the child narrator towards “a more than ordinarily scrupulous examination of [his] own existence”, as if under the searing torchlight of interrogation.<sup>589</sup>

The simple alteration renders him entirely lost within himself and his surroundings, as we might do when we find ourselves transported by sleep and dreams, totally forsaken again in the apparent waking and very real disappearance of his maternal home: “I lost all sense of the place in which I had gone to sleep, and when I awoke in the middle the night, not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of animal’s consciousness; I was more destitute than the cave-dweller.”<sup>590</sup> In one sense, the environment developed by the magic lantern concurrently frightens and enlightens the child narrator, for through its fantastical manifestations of the ‘other’ and the ‘beyond’, it depicts a new sort of landscape in the way that “pictures offer both reality and illusion, [presenting] a window on the world, separating us from it, enabling us to observe and hence control it.”<sup>591</sup> In this way, the magic lantern’s unfathomable images may expose Marcel to a fresh creative stimulant, functioning as more traditional images such as paintings or other artworks, as a way by which to broaden his visual perception both inwardly and outwardly.

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<sup>589</sup> Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 10.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>591</sup> Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular imagery* (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), 6.

However, it may also demonstrate the potential damage of parental misgivings, not only as a reminder of the ways in which slapdash attempts to remedy childhood woes can result in a malady far worse, but also as a symbol of the harmful effects of the adult world on that of the child in general. The magic lantern incident becomes symbolic of the significant notion of “the sensitive child developing into an awareness of the complexities of life [...] on the edge of life, capable of receiving life to its fullest, capable too of finding it only to have it ruthlessly withdrawn by the plethora of powers that surround them.”<sup>592</sup>

It is unsurprising, therefore, to find that Proust likened his life within four walls, his sickbed-come-workbed-come-sleepbed-come-deathbed, to Noah in his ark.<sup>593</sup> Mavor has written on the significance of J.M. Barrie’s famous child character Peter’s bed transforming from a nest to a boat in order to facilitate his voyage to the Gardens: “how fitting that Peter’s bed is a boat: for, just as Peter can leave the confines of his body by flying, dreams allow us to leave our bodies, to slip, to fly out of consciousness, even to escape adulthood, while remaining (tight) within.”<sup>594</sup> In this way, Proust as both a child and adult exemplifies the childish satisfaction of shutting oneself away from the outer world, something like the sense of contentedness we all feel watching a torrential downpour of rain from the safety and cosiness of indoors. Like a womb, a vessel at sea, especially one with a sealed sort of cabin, offers a capsule by which one can not only remain protected from the

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<sup>592</sup> Coveney, *The Image of Childhood*, 194.

<sup>593</sup> Marcel Proust, “A mon ami Willie Heath: mort à Paris le 3 octobre 1893”, in *Les Plaisirs et les jours*, (Paris : Librairie Gallimard, 1924), 13-14.

<sup>594</sup> Mavor, Reading Boyishly, 219. *The Little White Bird*, first published in 1902, was the novel which first introduced the character of Peter Pan. In 1906, the chapters containing Peter were published as a separate book called *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, which gave birth to further publications and versions based on the popular character, such as *Peter and Wendy* and *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up* in 1911.

elements of a potentially stormy exterior, but also concealed and separate from any attempted entrance from outsiders. Accordingly, for Proust, his ark-like bed is not just a “hermetically sealed compartment” in which he can hide, but also a vessel by which he can float away and leave the world behind, escaping both the harshness of adult influence and the creative-constraining reality of the modern world.<sup>595</sup>

The appeal of water and related vessels proved a significant influence in the life and work of Redon as well. Born in the port city of Bordeaux, on a bend of the expansive Garonne River, at one side accessible to large ships arriving from the Atlantic, and on the other home to low-lying marshy plains, Redon felt himself profoundly connected to waterscapes: “I would have loved [...] to have been born in the middle of those waves which, since then, I have often contemplated with pain and sadness.”<sup>596</sup> Such a desire expressed in adult years, especially when coupled with the torturous experience of having been wrenched from family life at a young age, points to a yearning for a sort of oceanic feeling that Freud considers a form of “infantile regression.”<sup>597</sup>

Redon’s fascination with the sea is indicative of his wish to return to the comfort of the womb, or to create an environment which mimics its comfort and sense of the care-free: “the oceanic feeling [is] to be regarded as repetition either of the very early mother-child relationship or of the still earlier intra-uterine existence, during which we were really one with our universe and were really floating in the amniotic fluid with practically no weight to carry.”<sup>598</sup> As Redon himself declared, “to leave an accustomed place has always been a kind of death for me”, and so it is

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<sup>595</sup> Proust in Werner, “Psychology”, 277.

<sup>596</sup> Odilon Redon, “To Myself” quoted in Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 5.

<sup>597</sup> Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 91-95.

<sup>598</sup> Michael Balint, *Thrills and Regressions*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1959), 75.

scarcely surprising that throughout Redon's work we find evidence of not only the suffering he underwent in light of his familial abandonment, but also the lifelong yearning he felt for the original, accustomed place from which he was pulled: his mother's womb.<sup>599</sup>

Redon's banishment as a child rendered him not only bereft of familial interaction, but also that of people in general, forcing him instead to venture outdoors to nature, in search of what he had been denied by the human world. Consequently, this countryside estate became a trigger in Redon's imaginative and creative expression, for not only did it provide a landscape of endlessly inspiring flora and fauna, but it was his arrival there, exiled from his family, which provided the initial inner turmoil from which sprang artistic purpose. It so proved that, like a womb, sealed and insulating but filled with the buoyant fluid of thought, "Peyrelebadé was the child Redon's playground and prison cell, a place of physical confinement and imaginative liberation".<sup>600</sup> Mavor has discussed the ways in which Jules Michelet's "love of Mother runs the gamut from *his* own mother to *our* earth as Mother, the latter manifesting itself in his predilection for mud baths, a *reunited* of himself with *terra mater*", which proves a poignant state of mind to consider in relation to Redon.<sup>601</sup>

In the same way that Michelet "felt her very clearly, caressing and comforting, warming her wounded child [until he] no longer distinguished [himself] from her", Redon's affinity with the natural world grew so strong that like a baby who knows no life beyond that within his mother's homely body, he felt an

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<sup>599</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 97.

<sup>600</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 10.

<sup>601</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 32.

attachment to nature's bosom that rendered him as much a part of her as he was once his birth mother.<sup>602</sup> That is to say, for Redon, in the absence of his family, "the biological mother is replaced by a mythical one – nature."<sup>603</sup> And it is with this Mother Nature that he now shares everything, and within whom he finds all the comfort and inspiration he lacked beforehand: "Nature, thus measured, and informed, becomes my source, my yeast, my ferment."<sup>604</sup> And so in much the same way that the tiny folds of the sheets enveloping Proust's bed-nest-boat became his place of refuge and creativity, it was the shadowy crevices, nooks, and crannies of the natural world which appealed to Redon, and into which he immersed himself, fascinated by his capacity, through his artwork, to give "human life to unlikely creatures according to the laws of probability, while, as much as possible, putting the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible."<sup>605</sup>

Whereas Proust ultimately found solace in the acceptance and absorbance of his bedroom, spending most of his time enshrouded in the cloak of his bedclothes, Redon did not suffer from the same fear of solitude and maternal abandonment that consumed Proust (he had, after all, already suffered it). Consequently, whilst "at night, Marcel sank into primordial anguish", it was the very qualities of the primordial of the outside world which opened Redon up to a new and liberating form of artistic expression.<sup>606</sup> Much like Proust, "the trajectory of Redon's life and thought had driven him inside himself, towards his own subjectivity and dreams", but it was not until he met the little-known botanist Armand Clavaud (1828-1890)

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<sup>602</sup> Jules Michelet, "La Montagne", quoted in Roland Barthes, *Michelet*, trans. Richard Howard, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 49.

<sup>603</sup> Ten-Doesschate Chu, "Family matters", 66.

<sup>604</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 24.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>606</sup> Bloch-Dano, *Madame Proust*, 70.

when he was about twenty years old that he learned how to harness and effectively represent his visions and experiences.<sup>607</sup>

What began for Redon as a childhood interest in the infinite creatures and abundant plant life of the natural world around him, developed, under the tutelage of Clavaud, into a “completely new perspective on the fantastic, on the multifarious morphological forms and figures that seem to unfold as simply as in a children’s book” that had landed in his lap, serendipitously falling open on the most marvellous pages.<sup>608</sup> Clavaud’s friendship and mentorship not only put an end to the artist’s “lifelong search for visual metaphors for sombre moods and haunting reveries, [...] introduc[ing] Redon to the revelatory experience of looking at nature through a microscope”, but it provided him, for possibly the first time ever, with someone who seemed to understand his unique outlook: “Clavaud shared with Redon a fierce pride and stubborn introspection as well as a sense of being unjustly ignored by his contemporaries.”<sup>609</sup> <sup>610</sup>

Such is the variety in style, technique, media and subject matter of Redon’s art that his association with the Symbolist movement is complex. Unlike many artistic groups and movements, banded together by their dedication to a single creative style or topic of interest, the Symbolists were united rather more ambiguously by their preference of the imaginary to the real, and their rejection of a contemptuously industrialising modernity in favour of sort of spiritual and mystical kingdom: “if there is one central tenet held by Symbolist artists, it is that life is

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<sup>607</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 20.

<sup>608</sup> Olaf Breidbach and Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, eds., *Art Forms in Nature: Prints of Ernst Haeckel*, (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 1998), 7.

<sup>609</sup> Gamwell, “Beyond the Visible”, 49-50.

<sup>610</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 20.

fundamentally mysterious”.<sup>611</sup> For Redon, whilst his affiliation with the movement is linked in no small part to his embracing of what contemporaneous Parisian journalist Amédée Pigeon called a depiction of “a new world, the world of dreams”, it is perhaps chiefly due to his wholehearted participation in “the Symbolists’ deep-seated pessimism derived [...] from a rejection of the world.”<sup>612 613</sup>

Redon drew most of his inspiration from Clavaud’s belief that “even the earliest, rudimentary living organisms had a kind of soul through which they participated in the totality of the universe”, taking personal comfort in the notion that even the most overlooked and seemingly insignificant beings can have an unexpectedly important role to play.<sup>614</sup> Drawing upon this, Redon dedicated a large portion of his life and career to producing numerous portfolios and albums of monochrome lithographs and charcoal sketches known as his *noirs*, which, begun under the tutelage of Rodolphe Bresdin, continued to emerge in the 1870s following Redon’s service in the army during the Franco-Prussian war.<sup>615</sup>

It was chiefly in these series of *noirs*, some of which were produced as illustrative accompaniments to innovative literature, others simply on topics of the artist’s own interest, that Redon “created a gloomy view of life emerging from dark, primordial slime where dwelt lethal bacteria” often including various “hybrid creatures, [...] abstruse, indeed frightening and scurrilous, yet lively [...] which]

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<sup>611</sup> H.R. Rookmaaker, *Gauguin and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art Theory*, (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1972), 220.

<sup>612</sup> Amédée Pigeon, “Le Courrier Républicain” on Redon’s 1881 exhibition, quoted in Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 102.

<sup>613</sup> Jullian, *Symbolists*, 19.

<sup>614</sup> Max Hollein and Margaret Stiffmann, eds., *Odilon Redon: As In A Dream*, (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2007), 17.

<sup>615</sup> Derived from the French “noir” to mean “black”.

suggests the influence of a corresponding view of the world”.<sup>616 617</sup> We may argue that Redon’s familial abandonment, and especially his maternal separation, afforded him a connection to the Symbolist manifesto through his endeavours to discover, depict and champion a world far removed from that which had let him down on both a personal and ideological level. Furthermore, it forged a strong link between the artist and Clavaud, for their mutual feelings of hardship and curious fascination with the natural world provided the former with the environment and inspiration suited to the development and representation of that for which he longed; the dark, earthy comfort of Mother Nature’s womb.

Redon’s search for artistic representation of such an environment in the natural world began, in the first instance, in the world of “unicellular organisms or in the medusae of the deep sea.”<sup>618</sup> The peculiar lifeforms found in Clavaud’s marshland investigations and the otherworldly fish at Redon’s beloved aquarium at Arcachon provided him with a vision of a world in which one could retain the weightless, cleansing bath of the amnion. The appeal of such an existence is evident not least in the artworks in which Redon depicts what Barbara Larson calls “mutating or hybrid forms that are informed by *transformisme*.”<sup>619</sup>

Consider Redon’s fifth plate to his first series of illustrations, published in 1888, to accompany Gustave Flaubert’s *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (*The Temptation of St. Anthony*) entitled *Ensuite parait un être singulier, ayant une tête humaine sur un corps de poisson* (*Then appears a singular being, having a human*

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<sup>616</sup> Gamwell, “Beyond the Visible”, 50.

<sup>617</sup> Hollein and Stuffmann, *As In A Dream*, 17.

<sup>618</sup> Breidbach and Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Art Forms*, 14.

<sup>619</sup> Barbara Larson, “Evolution and Degeneration in the Early Work of Odilon Redon”, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2003), 1. ‘Transformism’ is a theory which states that one species gradually transforms into another by descent through modification through many generations.



*head on the body of a fish*) (fig. 4.1), which features, as the title suggests, a fish with a human head.<sup>620</sup> Calmly gazing upon a scattering of barely discernible single-cell organisms, this unusual sea creature remains, like a tadpole part way through its metamorphosis of maturation, innocuously afloat his aquatic home. Informed by his attendance at various public lectures given at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, as well as his own investigations of comparative anatomy at the city's Museum of Natural History in the mid-1870s, Redon was significantly influenced by prominent theories surrounding the interspecies relationships.<sup>621</sup>

French naturalist Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, considered by many to be the 'father of embryology', for example, "believed that a single skeletal type pervaded nature and searched for intermediary creatures between kingdoms", which proved a foundation for works such as Ernst Haeckel's 1866 Theory of Recapitulation, which stated that the "development of advanced species was seen to pass through stages represented by adult organisms of more primitive species."<sup>622</sup> <sup>623</sup> Such scholarship boiled down to preeminent research of the period attesting to "human embryos endur[ing] a fish or animal stage", which was likely to have buttressed Redon's enthusiasm for a peaceful, uterine existence.<sup>624</sup> Such biogenetic theories fed into discourses on social degeneration popularised by *fin-de-siècle* pessimism which was imbued further with hues of national anxiety following the failures of the Franco-Prussian War. Concurrently, conjecture on evolution, such as Charles Darwin's

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<sup>620</sup> *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* will hereafter be referred to as *Tentation*.

<sup>621</sup> André Mellerio, "Interview with Odilon Redon", 30<sup>th</sup> November 1891, Mellerio Archive, Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>622</sup> Larson, "Evolution", 2.

<sup>623</sup> Scott F. Gilbert, *Developmental Biology: Chapter 23: 2 Haeckel's Biogenetic Law*, <http://10e.devbio.com/article.php?id=219> Further reading on Haeckel's theory can be found in Waldo Shumway's article "The Recapitulation Theory" (*The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1932, 93-99).

<sup>624</sup> University of Cambridge, "The Fitzwilliam Museum – 'Et que des yeux sans tête flottaient comme des mollusques.'" <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/redon/gallery/6/page.html?p=14>.

concept of the ‘survival of the fittest’, was being harnessed as a means by which to rally the spirits of a defeated nation.

Although Redon’s 1883 portfolio *Les Origines (Origins)* (fig. 4.2), functioning in its own way as “a dark philosophical spectre that emerged in the shadow of evolutionary theory”, participated in a satirical critique of scientific notions of progression, presenting an ad-hoc assortment of monsters, representative of man’s retrogressive moral evolution, his interest in evolutionary theory lies chiefly in its relationship with notions of hybridity, and especially that of the natatorial human residing within Mother Nature’s womb.<sup>625</sup> Inspired by Clavaud’s perception of what he termed a “harmonie universelle”, Redon yearned for a return to a world in which man, animal and plant lived in and around each other, unfettered by the arbitrary divides of scientific dogma.<sup>626</sup>

The striking frontispiece for *Les Origines* (fig. 4.2) includes a splurging amalgamation of indeterminable creatures and species, light and dark, detailed and sketchy, emanating and skulking, a perplexing melange of human, plant and animal. Forever pained by his familial exile due to his perceived inadequacy for the modern world, Redon sought, through his artwork, the renewal of the basic, organic linkage between culture, nature and society that had existed long before modernity severed it: “Proud human beings, haughty, cruel, mighty and grotesque gave me almost a dream of primitive life, a nostalgia for the pure and simple life of our origins.”<sup>627</sup> Like Clavaud, who “was not interested in banal listings of characteristics [and instead] fascinated by individual attributes of plants – each having its own living

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<sup>625</sup> Larson, “Evolution”, 1.

<sup>626</sup> H.D. Schotsman “Clavaud: Sa vie – son oeuvre”, *Bulletin du Centre Recherches Scientifiques de Biarritz*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1971), 755. Translates from the French to mean ‘universal harmony’.

<sup>627</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 70.

personality”, Redon’s lithographs combined animal, human and plant, merging forms to create those he envisaged existing on “the edge of the imperceptible world, that life which lies between animal and plant” and with which he felt an affinity in their tiny, marginalised though nevertheless enclosed, unexposed environment far preferable to him than that of the harsh, extra-uterine one.<sup>628 629</sup>

Redon’s aching search for entrance by which to retreat into Mother Nature’s womb is perhaps most evident in his depiction of polyps, which, taking shape as “a sort of organic crystallography – or, organic stereometry”, not only offer circular and ovular forms suggestive of the spherical or egg-shaped space of the womb, but also a unique vision of “embryonic beings” indicative of the human foetus afloat the amniotic fluid of its swaddling sack.<sup>630 631</sup> Redon’s thirteenth plate from his third series of *Tentation* illustrations, entitled *Et que des yeux sans tête flottaient comme des mollusques* (*And the eyes without heads were floating like molluscs*) (fig. 4.3) depicts an ambiguous scape peppered with various cellular creatures, who, boasting little more than eyes and the sweeping arabesque of a partially-formed fishtail, resemble something of the mid-cycle tadpole, the archetypal creature of amphibious metamorphosis to which Redon may have considered himself akin. It is in these sorts of Redon’s works in which we can clearly detect evidence of Clavaud’s influence, down to the precise similarity of the natural peculiarities of the artist’s embryonic polyps (figs. 4.3 and 4.4) and the botanist’s scientific diagrams of minute marsh life (fig. 4.5), both equally “exquisite in their ornamental morphology.”<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>628</sup> Obituary to ‘Armand Clavaud’ in “Actes de la Société linnéenne de Bordeaux”, 1890, quoted in Larson, “Evolution”, 2.

<sup>629</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 14.

<sup>630</sup> Breidbach and Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Art Forms*, 9.

<sup>631</sup> B. Guinadeau, “La Réaction idéaliste: XXII, Odilon Redon”, *La Justice*, 24th May 1893.

<sup>632</sup> Breidbach and Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Art Forms*, 9.

Redon delivers a message in both the visual appearance and title of his lithograph *N'y a-t-il pas un monde invisible? (Is there not an Invisible World?)* (fig. 4.5), in which a dark and obscured tree or coral stands abundant in pale, sprouting polyps, balloon-like in their bobbing motion across the print. The tiny faces, representative in their various expressions of a myriad of moods and feelings, alongside Clavaud's "micro-organisms [...] seen in brilliant natural colour and immaculate detail, [together offer] an extraordinary sense of being transported to another scale", one in which Redon can shrink himself down to a foetus again and return to the soothing confines of the womb.<sup>633</sup> This transportation can be understood as a visual metamorphosis akin to that undergone in Proust's child-narrator's magic lantern-inspired visions, as much as a metaphysical one which allowed Redon re-entrance to the womb, linked by the notion of these strange organisms or shifting shadowy shapes whose "faces were for the most part blurred with this misty effulgence of a dawn from which their actual features had not yet emerged."<sup>634</sup> The notion of this visual cacophony with which Redon was met both amongst the rock-pools and in his mind is reminiscent of the mesmerising spectacle to which Proust's narrator was exposed at the opera:

"... almost everywhere, the white deities who inhabited those sombre abodes had taken refuge against their shadowy walls and remained invisible, [...] their vaguely human forms detached themselves languidly one after the other from the depths of the night which they embroidered, and, raising

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<sup>633</sup> Gamwell, "Beyond the Visible", 49.

<sup>634</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume II: Within a Budding Grove*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 560.

themselves towards the light, [...] emerged into the chiaroscuro of the surface where their gleaming faces appeared behind the playful, frothy undulations, [and] the flood parted to admit a new nereid who [...] had just floated into blossom out of the shadowy depths, [...] the spectre of an ideal figure projected against the darkness.”<sup>635</sup>

Proust and Redon’s sense of being overwhelmed by the frantic business of these visions, by the multifariousness of “all these heads living and palpitating around [them] [which] stand out against a dark background of a brightness and richness” is relieved by the latter’s 1883 work *Chimère* (*Chimera*) (fig. 4.6), which offers the viewer a detailed close-up of one of these beings and a chance to study it in isolation.<sup>636</sup> Its perfectly spherical face of calm solemnity is encircled by the spiral of its own fishtail, forming a sort of twisted shell encasing. Part-way between egg and fish, human and crustaceous sea-creature, rudimentary embryo and expressive being, this image is a perfect embodiment of the notion of the in-between with which Redon felt an affinity.

It is often said that “a particular affinity exists between childhood and nature”, and it is such a connection which aids one’s passage back to youth when immersed in the natural world.<sup>637</sup> It is in this way that Redon’s deeply personal artwork also strikes a particularly poignant chord with the collective voice of society, and his contribution is twofold. First, his fascination with and championing of the hidden peculiarities of the natural world emphasises the “stark contrast

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<sup>635</sup> Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, 37-39.

<sup>636</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 65.

<sup>637</sup> Martens, *Promise of Memory*, 21.

between the harsh realities of civil society and unsullied nature.”<sup>638</sup> Second, Redon’s depiction and channelling of the child becomes a symbol of rejection of the modern world, serving as a “means of escape from the pressures of adult adjustment, a means of regression towards the irresponsibility of youth, childhood, infancy, and ultimately nescience itself.”<sup>639</sup> It was arguably the ‘primitive’ surroundings and culture of Redon’s own childhood in the Médoc which informed not only his interest in folk art and that of children, but also his socio-political outlook, namely by creating “autonomous works of art that implicitly condemn a vulgar contemporaneity [and has] the capacity to undermine bourgeois received ideas.”<sup>640</sup>

Redon’s journal, written from the age of twenty-seven up until his death, goes some considerable way to revealing the depth to which Redon felt, like other artists towards the end of the nineteenth century, “very much abroad in an alien world.”<sup>641</sup> Save for his own personal tribulations as both a child and adult, which indelibly colour his every outlook in life, Redon seemed most affected by the moral descent of man that he perceived amongst the middle and upper classes especially: “What miserable sadness in this life which flows away between four streets, surrounded by vacant people who spend their passion and their life talking about others.”<sup>642</sup> Fed in part by his own sense of injustice, Redon felt fixated by the apparent polarity between the greedy modern man of urbanity and the marginalised simplicity of the natural and the innocent: “The poorest and the humblest of women,

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<sup>638</sup> Daniel R. Guernsey, “Childhood and aesthetic education: the role of *Emile* in the formation of Gustave Courbet’s *The Painter’s Studio* in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, by Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 72.

<sup>639</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 240.

<sup>640</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 3.

<sup>641</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 241.

<sup>642</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 59.

[...] the weak being forgotten by the world, will always be the charming and sacred one who deserves to exist.”<sup>643</sup>

As Jodi Hauptman observes, “Redon’s entire career consisted in finding ways to represent nature’s surplus. His monsters unwittingly came to symbolize the staunchly idiosyncratic nature of his artistic trajectory: art, like the monster itself, would prove us wrong in our will to distinguish between human and nonhuman, ugly and beautiful”, reinforcing the artist’s will to exist in a world which combined human, plant and animal in a harmonious, non-discriminatory fashion.<sup>644</sup> Whilst many artists and writers associated with the Symbolist movement have been considered later by their contemporaries as what Jean-Paul Sartre dubbed “Knights of Nothingness”, in denial of their own privilege and, hiding behind the pretence of a just cause, desperately clinging onto the coat-tails of an outdated religion of decadence, Redon’s own fight was different, and seemed somehow more genuine.<sup>645</sup>

Redon uses prominent doctrine of the epoch and turns it on its head, drawing conclusions which prove at odds with the intended message. Whilst popular accounts of race theory and concepts of ‘primitivism’ informed condescending views of children, which were in turn drawn from the previously discussed laws of evolution by which species pass through gradually improving stages, Redon offered a converse slant on the subject. In a similar vein to that which runs through Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Redon suggests that it is rather ‘civilised’ society which resides on a lower moral rung to those which it most frequently treads upon: “how ugly he is, this old bourgeois: and they are beautiful, these sublime

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<sup>643</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 48.

<sup>644</sup> Jodi Hauptman, *Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2005), 59.

<sup>645</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre quoted in Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 178.

children of polar life [...] in the shadow of the virgin forest.”<sup>646</sup> Hippolyte Taine, Professor of Aesthetics at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris once said “from the peasant, the labourer and the bourgeois pacified and tamed by old civilisation, we see all of a sudden spring forth the barbarian and still worse the primitive animal, the grinning wanton baboon, who chuckles as he slays and gambols over the ruins he has accomplished.”<sup>647</sup> Whilst the Conradian premise of Taine’s words rings true, Redon’s aim is in beseeching us further still to relinquish the laziness of veneer-viewing, to recall that even the most notoriously hideous creatures maintain a gentle quality, and to appreciate it we must search much deeper, as he did, to the darkest layers and crevices in which we find the truest and most marginalised aspects of nature.<sup>648</sup>

Redon’s personal sense of *fin-de-siècle* sorrow is reflected in the lamenting expressions bestowed by his embryonic, womb-residing creatures. In his own way, he lived up to Taine’s belief that art produced in an age of misery should itself be miserable: “if you place a man who has lost his health before a Rubens he will turn away and face the works of Rembrandt” (the latter of whom, this old master of darkness, was incidentally a favourite of Redon’s).<sup>649</sup> Redon’s lithograph *Écllosion* (*Blossoming*) (fig. 4.7), from his 1879 album *Dans le rêve* (*In the Dream*), demonstrates this. The print features the profile view of a floating face which is peering out with a sense of hopelessness at the world external to his spherical abode. Notoriously fixated with the notion of vision, especially in relation to the idea of the

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<sup>646</sup> Odilon Redon, *À Soi-même*, (Paris: Editions Floury, 1923), 57.

<sup>647</sup> Hippolyte Taine, *The Origins of Contemporary France : The Revolution*, trans. John Durand, (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1878), 52-53.

<sup>648</sup> Odilon Redon, *I am the First Consciousness of Chaos: The Black Album*, (Washington: Solar Books, 2010), 93.

<sup>649</sup> Hippolyte Taine, *Philosophie de l’art, leçons professées à l’Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, (Paris : G. Baillière, 1865), 98.



insightful view of the philosophical inner eye, Redon's imagery is often peppered with optical bodies. Whilst this typically takes the form of an enormous, discernible eyeball, he does engage with more subtle representations, such as that of *Écllosion*, in which the plentiful and scratchy strokes which detail the upper part of the sphere suggest eyelashes, and the pale face, his own eye unnaturally large and skyward, forms a patch of bright light within the darkness of the pupil, together forming an image in which "at first there were only vague shadows, in which one suddenly caught [...] the phosphorescence of a pair of famous eyes."<sup>650</sup> This eye-creature, hovering above a calm body of water, like a foetal embryo within the amnion, appears to harbour a pessimistic inner-eye vision of the world, gazing out upon an environment he dreads having to join.

The darkness of this, both visually and metaphorically, plunges a level further with Redon's 1893 work *La Cellule auriculaire* (*Auricular Cell*) (fig. 4.8), whose title is reflective of another sensory interest, hearing, which incidentally shares a similar reliance as eyes and the womb on the balance and lubrication of fluids. The woeful face which almost fills the dark, circular encasement is reminiscent with its unnaturally droopy ear of a sort of faun-like creature, which had proved a mainstay of Symbolist imagery ever since the publication in 1876 of Stéphane Mallarmé's landmark poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* (*The Afternoon of a Faun*). Like the faun of Mallarmé's poem who is roused from his afternoon snooze, Redon's creature appears sleepy, though arguably his tiredness and exhaustion is that of a more weary nature in light of the shape of the world. Perhaps this particular creature, another of the mystical in-between world to which Redon felt so attached,

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<sup>650</sup> Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, 37.

is in the process of succumbing to an eternal, pre-natal slumber by which to block the world outside.

Redon's works by their very nature are deliberately ambiguous. In the same way that all of these tiny creatures, all these "geneses retain a little shadow and mystery", by extension, so do Redon's artistic portrayals of them, for they pertain to a shadowy world in which not everything is quite as it seems, and in which mystery and truth remains enshrouded until discovery by those who endeavour to search.<sup>651</sup> In-keeping with Mallarmé's discernment that "to describe an object is to eliminate three quarters of the pleasure", Redon's art is one of suggestion, inspiring the viewer to engage with and ponder the image in a way that quashes the blinkered acceptance of spoon-fed doctrine symptomatic of the era.<sup>652</sup> This is perhaps indicative also of Redon's own fervour for contemplation, his "tendency towards scrupulous and somewhat masochistic analyses of every aspect of existence, often manifest[ing] in aesthetic introspection", which informed his every stroke.<sup>653</sup>

Bound by this feverish introspection, Redon can only find relief in the all-consuming and impenetrable envelopment of Mother Nature's womb. His 1880 work *Le puits* (*The Well*) (fig. 4.9) depicts this. Unclear as to whether the viewpoint is from inside the well looking up, or from outside looking in, its appearance is typically ambiguous. The composition can be understood as that of a baby peacefully sleeping within the padded confines of the placenta, itself within the womb. The face at the centre of the image, baby-like in its soft shape and downy

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<sup>651</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 105.

<sup>652</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé quoted in Jullian, *Symbolists*, 16.

<sup>653</sup> Sophie Handler, "Redon, Odilon (1840-1916)", *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Modernism*. Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2016. <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/redon-odilon-1840-1916> (accessed 28th October 2017).

hair, appears contentedly asleep as it floats in the perfect blackness of the well's amniotic fluid. Instead of an encirclement of cold, solid stones forming the rim of the well, the wedge shapes which surround the baby seem like spongy segments of placenta lining, softened by their rounded edges, providing a protective, cushiony layer to the uterine haven. Beyond that, the endless and ambiguous opaqueness of patchy darkness implies the expansive but contained space of the womb, the seemingly infinite though nevertheless secure world of the tiny child.

Although this image is not an overly fantastical one filled with otherworldly creatures and mesmerising intricacy, it is nevertheless suggestive of a need to soothe and heal an overwhelming sense of disquiet, participating in "Symbolism's anxiety to be protected from the outside world with scenes which have no connection with everyday life", in this case, through a relinquishment of the self back to the life before life as we know it, through a "little door through which his [Redon's] own imagination escaped to travel far down the black paths of lithography" and into the inky pool of the womb.<sup>654</sup>

For as much as Redon's artwork was one of the nightmare, in which we are "plunged into a macabre milieu, [with] somnambulistic figures twisted with fear", it is also of the dream, and not just in the utopian sense.<sup>655</sup> Much of the sentiment behind Redon's artwork emulates John Ruskin's words from *The Stones of Venice*, "his beasts and birds, however monstrous, will have profound relations with the true", for despite the often wildly unnaturalistic subject matter of his *oeuvre*, comprising the creatures and shapes of both dream and nightmare, his messages are

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<sup>654</sup> Jullian, *Symbolists*, 51, 42.

<sup>655</sup> J.K. Huysman quoted in Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 102.

ultimately ones which resonate on a profoundly real and human level.<sup>656</sup> Redon was probably never so in line with his artistic affiliation than in his echoing of the statement that “Symbolists were people who loved intimate relationships and shrank from bright lights”, reflected most poignantly in his lifelong endeavour to retreat to Mother Nature’s womb.<sup>657</sup>

Whilst this most frequently manifested itself in his embryonic, encircled beings of the miniscule extremes of the universe, Redon was equally enamoured by the giants of the natural world: trees. Steadfast in the notion that “trees and all the inanimate nature of the countryside live in the life of man”, and influenced by beliefs amongst local Médoc communities that trees are possessive of supernatural qualities, Redon depicts trees in a way that emphasises not only their imposing grandeur, but also their unique anthropomorphism, a combination by which Charles Baudelaire too was struck: “La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers/Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles/L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symbols/Qui l’observent avec des regards familiers.”<sup>658 659</sup>

Redon’s ninth plate from his third *Tentation* series, entitled *Je me suis enfoncé dans la solitude. J’habitais l’arbre derrière moi* (*I plunged into solitude. I dwelt in the tree behind me*) (fig. 4.10) exemplifies this.<sup>660</sup> The lithograph depicts a thick-trunked tree standing in the very centre of a dense, dark forest, the plentiful outreaching branches of the tree and its surrounding shrubbery filling almost the

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<sup>656</sup> John Ruskin, *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (New York: Longmans, Green & Co, 1909), III, 141-142.

<sup>657</sup> Jullian, *Symbolists*, 22.

<sup>658</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 121.

<sup>659</sup> Charles Baudelaire, “Correspondances” in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, trans. Richard Howard (Boston: David R. Godine, 1983), 193. Translation: “Nature is a temple in which living pillars/Sometimes give voice to confused words/Man passes there through forests of symbols/Which look at him with understanding eyes”.

<sup>660</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Enfoncé*.

entire space with a tangle of shadowy leaves and twigs. It is not difficult to see how the child Redon might have been so inspired by these dark, mystical forests of the Médoc, for he, as all “thinkers love shade, they walk in it, they delight in it as if their brains had found their *element* there”, his element being a sort of dark, ‘primitive’ connection between himself and the untamed natural world.<sup>661</sup> Such a connection becomes emblemised in the tree of *Enfoncé*, which, boasting patches of shaded bark serving as dark, squinty eyes and a large hole of broken tree trunk representing a sort of gaping mouth, both threatening and welcoming, the anthropomorphism of the tree melanges the human and natural worlds.

Taking into consideration the title of this particular print, it is as though the child Redon, alone in the savage forests of Peyrelebadé, longs to retreat into the cavernous protection of the hollow tree, not only similar to what Roland Barthes called a childish desire to be “primitive, without culture”, but also to be encased and safeguarded by that primitiveness from the very culture with which he feels at odds.<sup>662</sup> Similar to the “effect of shutting childhood eyes [to] wall off the world [for] as little children, many of us believed that if we shut our eyes, we couldn’t be seen”, Redon wished to be swallowed up by this tree-mouth, to be consumed by the grandeur of nature, never again to have to face the painful injustices and deafening solitude of the human world.<sup>663</sup> Just like his beloved region of Bordeaux, described as it was as “a mouth without a stomach”, Redon desired to be swallowed by its landscape’s tree, swallowed down not into the stomach, but into the comfort of the

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<sup>661</sup> Redon, *To Myself*, 135.

<sup>662</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 7.

<sup>663</sup> Carol Mavor, “Introduction: the unmaking of children” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 28.

womb again, to be consumed and harboured within the dark, safe confines of Mother.<sup>664</sup>

The notion of a recluse's haven within a tree is reminiscent of Proust's proclivity for a nest as a cosy, encircling encasement made up by and of the Mother, for as a mother bird uses her saliva to bind her structure, and plucks out her own feathers to provide a soft, cushiony lining, the nest becomes as much a home of the mother's body as the womb is. This "nostalgic return to the womb" which characterises both Proust and Redon's propensity for a shadowy existence, this desire to shy away from life's hardships, to be hidden away in the peaceful, comforting darkness of Mother, highlights an infantile mind-set at the heart of both figures even as adults.<sup>665</sup> As Gaston Bachelard confirms, "the nest image is generally childish", for not only is it suggestive of the womb environment, but also, in the case of Proust and Redon, of an adult yearning for a relinquishment of reality and reclusion to such an environment.<sup>666</sup>

It is not difficult to gauge the similarities between Proust and Redon. In many ways, their lives and works exemplify Ellen Handler Spitz's notion that "unusually creative individuals may dwell precariously on the edge of this divide", that is to say, the divide between the human and natural worlds, between real and imaginary, adult and child, outer and inner.<sup>667</sup> Yet in both instances, this is not just as a result of their heightened creativity, but also in no small part due to an upbringing in which familial affection is significantly lacking. This manifests itself

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<sup>664</sup> Albert Charles, *La Révolution de 1848 et la seconde République à Bordeaux et dans le département de la Gironde*, (Bordeaux : Editions Delmas, 1945), 37.

<sup>665</sup> Mavor, "Introduction", 32.

<sup>666</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 126.

<sup>667</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *The Brightening Glance: Imagination and Childhood*, (New York: Random House, 2007), 138.

in a longing to return to the womb, to the very essence of infancy in order to reclaim what is perceived as “the loss of childhood through the death of a mother”, whose death is not necessarily literal, but rather metaphorical, namely in her failing, wilful or accidental, to provide what Winnicott terms the “good enough mother”.<sup>668 669</sup>

A troubled beginning in life most often results in an adult life of turmoil; indeed, as Klein has clarified, if a child is not sufficiently guided and therefore undergoes enormous difficulties in “mastering its anxieties [...], its mental health in future years is not planted in firm soil”.<sup>670</sup> Just like Redon’s wilting plants and miniscule organisms, cowering in the darkness of earthly nooks starved of attention, and Proust’s tangle of a nest-boat-bed, awash a turbulent sea, the troubled child whose sensitivity is ignored or misunderstood can develop an enhanced sense of internalisation, for although they are ultimately places of comfort, beds, deep sea dwellings, nests, and wombs are nevertheless dark places. As Barthes once said, “to be excluded is not to be outside, it is to be alone in the hole”, and the hole of the womb to which Proust and Redon yearn to return is, after all, only necessary because of the inhospitability of the outside world.<sup>671</sup>

Continuing the theme of the natural and the botanical, these children suffer an abrupt sort of uprooting at the hands of their clumsy and careless parents, leaving their pithy stems exposed to the harshness of the elements and the surrounding weeds, unlikely ever again to manage to take root comfortably. Redon’s 1916 work

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<sup>668</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 54.

<sup>669</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 10. This theory, in plain terms, details the idea that a child requires a ‘good enough mother’ to provide his/her needs and support; in many cases, this is not the biological mother herself, and can take the form of many other figures or transitional objects of choice.

<sup>670</sup> Klein, *Psychoanalysis of Children*, 259.

<sup>671</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 121.

*Tête à la tige (Head on a Stem)* (fig. 4.11) goes some way to illustrate this point. The charcoal sketch features a large moon-like human face tilted to one side, which, relatively unmodulated, boasts two heavily-shaded eyes that gaze out at the viewer with a watchful solemnity. The face becomes somewhat egg-shaped by the addition of dark crescent petals at the top which form a sort of hat. The embryonic head is supported by a single, spindly stem which is planted in the centre of the landscape, which, save for a few sparse leaves in the foreground, is bleakly barren, an ambiguous white cloud-like shape on the right suggestive of a foreboding storm.

This image perhaps altogether emblemises Redon's own sense of belonging, or lack thereof; the soft, bright ambivalence of this baby face against the backdrop of a dreary sky, feebly propped up by a scaffold whose strength is doubtful, is thoroughly suggestive of a delicate child lost in the harshness of the world, all too aware of his vulnerability, bereft of familial aid: "a glorious flower [...] which had scarcely any life left in it, and no power of revelation: this flower was Redon."<sup>672</sup> In the case of most children, happy or otherwise, the realms of imagining and perceiving feel seamless, the worlds of real and make-believe, outside and inside.<sup>673</sup> And so we must ask ourselves therefore "what happens when a child is born who seems a misfit and when all attempts to love and understand him fail"?<sup>674</sup>

The works of Proust and Redon go some way to providing a response to this query, for they exemplify the experiences of children whose societal and thus familial structure had all the makings of a comfortable and supportive upbringing, but which failed, for it became "an ethos undermined in a culture that is debased

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<sup>672</sup> Elie Faure, *André Derain*, quoted in Jullian, *Symbolists*, 10.

<sup>673</sup> Spitz, *Brightening Glance*, 5.

<sup>674</sup> Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood*, 5.



with debris from neglected and abandoned objects. Unmothered. Stillborn”.<sup>675</sup>

Indeed, perhaps like a baby who never experiences life beyond the womb, and in this way wished to return to its spongy confines, back to a place which made sense, Redon perceived that in many ways, his “existence was without reason” by the standards of popular beliefs of the time.<sup>676</sup>

Feeling wholly rejected and lost in a world to which it seems most others considered themselves akin, these creative individuals conducted themselves in a manner that believed in the “superiority of art over reality”; they chose to view their own existence as not confined to the perimeters laid out by others.<sup>677</sup> For the average adult, comfortable in the society to which he has been prescribed, the inner world (that of the imagination, in plain terms) and the external world in which we live, like art and reality, exist as two separate, though perhaps complementing, entities. For children, however, the disambiguation is considerably less precise: “spaces, as we like to think, can be inner or outer, but for children, the gates swing back and forth”, in much the same way that for Proust and Redon, the womb space need not be off-limits, and re-admission from the outer to the inner seems an enviable possibility; the gate to the womb is not firmly shut.<sup>678</sup>

Forever troubled by the query which haunted their childhoods, “how can one be oneself and still be likable?” Proust and Redon as adults remained as they were as children, refusing the opportunity as they matured to follow suit and “distinguish clearly between dreams, fantasies, and waking states, between the self and others,

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<sup>675</sup> Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood*, 18.

<sup>676</sup> Eisenman, *Saint Redon*, 14.

<sup>677</sup> Randi Marie Birn, “The Windows of Imagination in ‘A la recherche du temps perdu’”, *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 5 (1970): 8.

<sup>678</sup> Spitz, *Brightening Glance*. 133.

between a picture and the thing pictured”.<sup>679</sup> <sup>680</sup> Whilst in many instances of this ilk, “mutism and parental withdrawal into abysses of self beget the annihilation of children”, perhaps it is the case on this occasion that Redon, just like Proust, remained something of a child in an adult’s body, using their painful childhood experiences to reflect upon and possibly reimagine a youth which was never allowed to flourish, thus simultaneously basking in a warm and calming pool of nostalgia for what might have been and wading through a tortuous swamp of why it was not.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Louise Bourgeois quoted in Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood*, 50.

<sup>680</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *Inside Picture Books*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>681</sup> Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood*, 96.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Toy Town Theatre: No Shadow, No Soul*

“... roles can be peeled away like layers of an onion to reveal a repressed core, a true self, which has been inhibited, clouded by the layers of social conditioning which obscure it.” Valerie Walkerdine, *Femininity as Performance* <sup>682</sup>

“... surface and surface alone [for] she was nothing in herself [...] Beyond the projected fantasies of her admirers, there lay a vacuum, a void [...] an empty shell which needed to be cloaked and adorned in the style of the moment.”  
Tamar Garb, *The Body in Time* <sup>683</sup>

It has already been established by now that for a long time, existing in a world disinterested in the seemingly ineffectual, “children were seen as miniature adults”, and thus simply a person in the making, on its way to being someone. <sup>684</sup> In another sense, however, we can view this semblance of a human “on a reduced scale” as something of a plaything or toy in the adult world, a pocket-size novelty for grown-up amusement. <sup>685</sup> We normally think of a toy as “a material object for children or others to play with [...] something contrived for amusement rather than for practical use”, which can be appreciated in light of the frivolity by which childhood and children are bathed in an adult-centric environment. However, the definition of ‘toy’ which reads as “to act idly or without seriousness; to trifle, ‘play’, deal carelessly (*with* a person or thing); also to make sport, mock”, rings startlingly

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<sup>682</sup> Valerie Walkerdine, “Femininity as Performance”, *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1989), 267.

<sup>683</sup> Tamar Garb, *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 46-51.

<sup>684</sup> Linda A. Pollock, “Foreword”, in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), xv.

<sup>685</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Random House, 1965), 34.

true of the deigning subordination to which adults subject children.<sup>686</sup> In the same way that “play acting [...] is a child’s instinctive need for enlarging his world of experiences”, often offering “the impression of a giant at play”, surrounded by a vast array of tiny replicas of recognisable members of the real world amongst which he experiences some semblance of interaction and control, adults can be seen to replicate this scenario in their treatment of children.<sup>687 688</sup>

The context of late-nineteenth century France offers a particularly interesting case study of the role of the toy in relation to children and childhood. Regardless of whether it is in a bid, conscious or otherwise, to assert authority, or a mere reflection of a *fin-de-siècle*-inspired, regressive self-infantilisation in reaction to a rapidly modernising world, this particular theme provides some context to what can be understood as a burgeoning conflation of children and toys on social, cultural, and artistic levels. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s description of the toy as “often an imitation of some familiar object” points to just “how important the exact portraiture of real life form and function had become in defining a [...] toy” in this period.<sup>689 690</sup> And what greater likeness to real life than the child, who, not quite a fully-formed human, but, in its diminutive similitude, has all the veneer and novelty of a small-scale version of its puppeteer. This points not only to the resounding popularity of humanoid toys such as dolls, puppets, and automata at this time, but also the great

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<sup>686</sup> OED: Oxford English Dictionary, ‘toy’ (noun), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204133?rskey=514W0Y&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> and ‘toy’ (verb) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204134?rskey=514W0Y&result=2#eid> (accessed 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

<sup>687</sup> Winifred H. Mills, “Creative Work with Children in the Field of Puppets”, *Junior-Senior High School Clearing House*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (1931), 471.

<sup>688</sup> David Hopkins, *Childish Things* (Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2010), 30.

<sup>689</sup> OED: Oxford English Dictionary, ‘toy’ (noun), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204133?rskey=514W0Y&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

<sup>690</sup> Anika Schleinzner, “Rehearsed Technology: The Definition of Technical Toys in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Icon*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2014), 28-29.

weight afforded to appearance and recognisability in society, upon which cultural and social norms were founded, giving rise to a compelling toy-child coalescence in the late-nineteenth century.

Operating under the ongoing concept of the toy-child, this chapter examines the extent to which various apparatus, namely fairytales and toys, were harnessed by adults as powerful tools of acculturation by which to instil from birth a very gendered, socially-contrived, and sanctioned pattern of existence. Drawing upon the child's natural existence outside the starkly 'black-and-white' demarcations of the adult world, that is to say, in the grey of the 'shadowlands' in between, alongside the emerging notions of the shadow as symbolic of a person's soul, this chapter considers the ways in which the adult-centricity of French long-nineteenth society contributed to the formulation of the toy-child image and concept in artistic and material culture, and in turn the reduction of the child into a soulless veneer of ideals.

Contemporary theories of child development conclude that central to this unyielding emphasis upon outward aspect alongside both the ongoing formulation of a legitimate person from child to adult, and the connected symbol of the toy, is the creation and maintenance of normative gender roles. Indeed, it is never really the case that 'a child' simply becomes 'an adult', but rather, "boys can be seen as apprentice men [and] girls, similarly, are apprentice women."<sup>691</sup> Such a distinction not only proves a lifelong focus and vocation by virtue of its perceived natural status, but also in its complex role as a cultural and social mainstay in an environment of ongoing fluctuation: "constitutions of femininity and masculinity

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<sup>691</sup> Carrie Paechter, *Being Boys; Being Girls: Learning Masculinities and Femininities* (New York: McGraw Hill Education: 2007), 7.

[are] not *fixed* [...] but *struggled over* in a complex relational dynamic.”<sup>692</sup>

Similarly, whilst “ideologies of gender (like all ideologies) are never complete or fixed, [for] their relationship to reality is always dynamic”, the same can be said of toys.<sup>693</sup>

It is no coincidence that an accelerated interest in these interconnecting issues in late-nineteenth century France occurred during a period marked by a growing preoccupation with all that was seen to characterise the future; children, industry, and concepts of the ‘Other’. As previous chapters have indicated, the French long-nineteenth century was a time both marred and lifted by a cacophony of political earthquakes, constantly shifting the social tectonics, and accelerating the urgency for stability. Not only do toys “serve as temporal markers, reflecting undercurrents of popular attitudes” of a given society, but they play a significant role in shaping the key constituents of this society’s future: children.<sup>694</sup> Accordingly, given that it was the latter decades of the nineteenth century that saw the burgeoning of a sincere interest in the related fields of child development and gender ideology, it comes as no surprise that this coincided with the publication of preliminary works on the study of toys by figures such as Édouard Fournier, Gaston Tissander, Léo Claretie, and “the supreme authority on the history of toys”, French historian Henry-René d’Allemagne (fig. 5.1).<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions* (New York: Verso Publishing, 1990), 105.

<sup>693</sup> Paul Smith. *Impressionism: Beneath the Surface* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1995), 62-63.

<sup>694</sup> Christopher P. Barton and Kyle Somerville, “Play Things: Children’s Radicalised Mechanical Banks and Toys, 1880-1930”, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2012), 53.

<sup>695</sup> Anthony Burton, “Design History and the History of Toys: Defining a Discipline for the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood”, *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1997), 8. Henry-René d’Allemagne’s works on toys include *Histoire des jouets (History of Toys)* (1902), *Récréations et passe-temps (Leisure and pastimes)* (1905), and *Les Cartes à jouer du quatorzième au vingtième siècle (Playing Cards from the fourteenth to the twentieth century)* (1906). Other prominent works

Concepts of gender and toys, therefore, exist in a sort of flux, an undulating continuum of intersecting helixes of time, place and experience. In much the same way that “toys generally correspond to the development of society”, Judith Butler has asserted that “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylised repetition of acts* [...] a constituted *social temporality*.”<sup>696 697</sup> This constant metamorphosis to which notions of gender and toys are subject is composed of layers. Like constantly overlapping leaves of parchment, these socially and historically articulated concepts develop like a multi-mantled ink-wash comprising thick cloaks of opaque black adorned with flimsy veils. Like the imbricating swathes of shadows which move in and amongst each other, there never exists one singly discernible and solid silhouette by which to trace a replicable model outline.

Somewhat paradoxical, then, is the dogmatism by which these two concepts were predominantly treated in the French long-nineteenth century, constraining their relationship to a double-pronged formula corresponding to the perceived strict biformity of gender. Far from acknowledging the milky-ink opacity of billowy shadow which characterises gender and toys as constituted in time and experience, French nineteenth-century society adopted a stark ‘black and white’ view which entertained no melange thereof. This gives new reason to the assertion that “toys mould generations”, for far more than functioning as a mere yardstick of society’s

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include *Jeux et jouets de jeune âge: choix de récréations amusantes et instructives* (*Games and Toys of Youth : Amusing and Instructive Choices for Leisure*) (1884) by Gaston Tissandier, *Histoire des jouets et des jeux d’enfants* (*History of children’s toys and games*) (1889) by Edouard Fournier, and *Les Jouets : histoire, fabrication* (*Toys: history, manufacture*) (1893) by Leo Claretie.

<sup>696</sup> H. Bublitz quoted in Anika Schleinzner, “Rehearsed Technology: The Definition of Technical Toys in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Icon*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2014), 21.

<sup>697</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 140-41.

evolution, toys became a significant and active tool by which gender particulars were shaped, a model which every child must strive to replicate, thereby giving rise to the conflation of the concept of a toy-child.<sup>698</sup>

The immovable rigidity of society's binary understanding of gender, and the resultant role and symbolism of the toy, lies chiefly in the conflation of the former, in terminology, concept, and content, with sex. The trepidation with which gender has been treated for many years in scholarly circles is testament to the precariousness of its relationship with sex, and more specifically, the obstinate amalgamation thereof by any society prescribing to the patriarchal standard. Simply put, sex is the term given to the physical, bodily division of boy or girl, male or female, and whilst although there is some possible ambiguity (namely in cases of hermaphroditism and transsexuality), sex is a fairly inflexible dichotomy. Gender, on the other hand, both in nineteenth-century French society and still today, is significantly less secure and thus far more complicated: "biological sex was seen as something relatively fixed, a 'truth' of the body, while gender was more contingent".<sup>699</sup>

Defined by Joan W. Scott as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes [and] a primary way of signifying relationships of power", gender represents a code by which social functioning is regulated.<sup>700</sup> Gender, "historical and performative", constitutes an ongoing enactment and fulfilment of learned behaviours and identities as stipulated by a given social environment, and is thus naturally at odds but forcibly aligned with a

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<sup>698</sup> Joseph Wachelder, "Toys as Mediators", *Icon*, Vol. 13 (2007), 136.

<sup>699</sup> Paechter, *Being Boys; Being Girls*, 9.

<sup>700</sup> Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in Annette F. Timm and Joshua A. Sanborn, *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe: A History from the French Revolution to the Present Day* (Oxford, Berg: 2007), 8-9.



biological truth to which it is perceived to correspond, much like the creation of toys which aim to mimic human life, but which then contribute to a conflation of the toy with the child, resulting in an increasing moulding of the latter into the ideals of the former.<sup>701</sup>

To confound the matter further, the adjectival descriptors of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are automatically understood to correlate with the perceived typical attributions of males and females, creating a sort of social dichotomy which places two genders parallel to and correspondingly alongside two sexes, wholly based upon assumptions and ideals, regardless of an individual’s traits, thereby creating a norm which prohibits deviation: “‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ will be used as descriptors for clusters of behaviours or attributes, which will be related to dominant social conceptions of masculinity and femininity, but without prejudice as to whether these are taken up by or associated with actual men or women.”<sup>702</sup> This in itself is riddled with contradictions, for as Carrie Paechter notes, “a person’s masculinity or femininity is not innate, is not natural, but instead is something that is learned, constantly reworked and reconfigured, and enacted to the self and others”, yet it is nevertheless founded upon and absorbed from teachings which draw their counsel from the perceived normal attributes which are considered as natural as the biological sex with which they are associated.<sup>703</sup>

The very existence of a norm in society is perplexing, for its entire basis is one of self-fulfilment. As Butler puts it, “the very attribution of femininity to female bodies as if it were a natural or necessary property takes place within a normative

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<sup>701</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 10.

<sup>702</sup> Paechter, *Being Boys; Being Girls*, 13.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

framework in which the assignment of femininity to femaleness is one mechanism for the production of gender itself.”<sup>704</sup> In other words, whilst norms strive to become the only reality by which we can exist comfortably in a given society, they are active agents in their own affirmation, only becoming norms because they are constantly repeated as such. Once again we encounter a prong of this debate in which habit, reinforcement, and repetition betray the very lack of ‘naturalness’ upon which the entire ideology of normative gender is mistakenly based.

This automatic assignment of gender to a seemingly corresponding sex carries numerous issues, chiefly in the unwavering expectation bestowed by society on a boy or girl, man or woman, to behave stereotypically ‘boyishly’ or ‘girlishly’, ‘manly’ or ‘womanly’. We are born, quite unknowingly, into an environment which has laid out appropriate behaviours for us from birth, basing these stipulations wholly upon our sex, what society deems suitable a manner by which to operate, and with complete disregard for the individual characteristics of that person, which may or may not fall within the allowed boundaries of their sex-gender mould. As Butler put it, “I am constituted by a social world I never chose” and yet “I am someone who cannot *be* without *doing*” and thus in order to be accepted and validated as a legitimate person, one must corroborate one’s existence as a male or female by constantly maintaining an exacting masculine or feminine role.<sup>705</sup>

Accordingly, community acceptance is founded upon the “coercive exclusion of others and a claiming of superiority for members”, thereby galvanising the necessity to mould oneself like a beautiful bisque doll, forcibly if necessary, to

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<sup>704</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 10.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid, 3.

fit the carefully sculpted shape laid out by society.<sup>706</sup> Failing to do so can lead to a sense of detachment and apathy from which it is difficult to escape: “our experience of our identity is deeply bound up with our experience of being in the world, as it is negotiated locally through active and participatory community membership.”<sup>707</sup>

The predominance in this debate of self-fulfilling concepts is further exemplified by the longstanding social and cultural mainstay of the patriarchal system, which has remained in place to a greater or lesser degree in most societies since ancient times. Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a form of familial and social organisation characterised by “the predominance of men in positions of power and influence [...] with cultural values and norms favouring men, freq. with pejorative connotation”, and supported in the first by the apparently scientific assertions of ancient thinkers on the biological inferiority of women, the patriarchal system continued to garner support from those of academic high-standing well into the nineteenth century.<sup>708 709</sup> As Raewyn Connell points out, however, “what can be expected from a science of masculinity, being a form of knowledge created by the very power it claims to study?”<sup>710</sup> Therein lies its self-fulfilment, its viciously

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<sup>706</sup> Paechter, *Being Boys, Being Girls*, 36.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>708</sup> OED: Oxford English Dictionary, ‘patriarchy’, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138873?redirectedFrom=patriarchy#eid> (accessed 21<sup>st</sup> February 2016).

<sup>709</sup> Inspired by Aristotle’s (384-322BC) beliefs on the biological incompleteness of the female body, Greek physician Galen (129-200/216AD) claimed that female genitals were male versions turned inside out, whose imperfect development was indicative of their sex’s deformation. This has in the 20<sup>th</sup> century been defined by sexologist Thomas Laqueur (1945-) as the ancient ‘one-sex model’. The endurance of such theories is evident in the discourse of both philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874), the former of whom advised on the capitulation of the female for the greater good of man, and the latter of whom drew upon menstruation as a recurring wound as evidence of innate female weakness. Annette F. Timm and Joshua A. Sanborn, *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe: A History from the French Revolution to the Present Day* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

<sup>710</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 7.

cyclical nature which continues to propel without yielding, and whose authority goes unquestioned and unfettered by virtue of its instilment from our very first moments.

Whilst Freud has placed emphasis on the significance of breastfeeding as an early indication of a female's capacity to fulfil her expected role in effectively serving her family, symbolised by the image of "a good and satisfying breast, and a bad, absent breast", the sex-gender centeredness of the patriarchal model is imparted even earlier.<sup>711</sup> Because of the inextricable conflation of sex and gender, the determining of the former at birth automatically implies the latter, meaning that "when we assign a sex to a baby [it] places the baby into a clear category from which we then expect to make predictions about its future" and upon which we base an innumerable range of expectations and designs, all of which hinge upon biologically-determined but socially-articulated "systems of classification, regulation and normalisation."<sup>712 713</sup>

By introducing from birth a model that is then ceaselessly reinforced thereafter, the result is a child for whom no alternative to the prescribed norm realistically exists. Valerie Walkerdine refers to a "kind of greenhouse [...], a 'natural' place where childhood could progress untrammelled, and children would become the self-regulating and democratic citizens, the hope for the world", which proves a particularly accurate analogy, for a greenhouse is essentially a uniquely artificial yet natural environment; its purpose is to enhance and safeguard the growth and cultivation of living organisms in an environment which resembles the natural world in everything but its exclusion of external forces and factors, much like the

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<sup>711</sup> Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*, 150.

<sup>712</sup> Paechter, *Being Boys, Being Girls*, 6.

<sup>713</sup> Walkerdine, "Femininity as Performance", 271.

supposed ‘normal’ upbringing of a child in nineteenth-century France.<sup>714</sup> In this way, the proverbial plant, accustomed only to its greenhouse surroundings, knows nothing of the wider world outside of its encasement and so can only exist on the knowledge it has been drip-fed. By providing a regimented and shielded upbringing based on normative gender roles, children “are presented with, and inserted into, ideological and discursive positions by practices which locate them in meaning and in regimes of truth”.<sup>715</sup>

However, as Butler comments, and in correspondence with the ongoing magnification of appearance over depth, façade over truth, “sometimes a normative conception of gender can undo one’s personhood.”<sup>716</sup> The common converging of the child with the doll, for example, in a social, cultural, and artistic sense not only makes for a society comprising clusters of eerily manicured automatous children, unyieldingly bright-eyed, polished to a high shine, and decoratively clad in ornamental fabrics, but also one whose attention to such detail translates to a neglect for anything beyond the deftly lacquered shell: “the body is a canvas to be painted, a surface to be imprinted, a landscape to be marked out, [but] with so much emphasis on the signifier, the signified tends to vanish.”<sup>717</sup>

This concerted pattern of “fashion overshadowing personality” was epitomised by the popularity of Charles Perrault’s (1628-1703) adaptations of various traditional and pre-existing folktales into what became the new and powerful literary genre of the fairytale, which placed traditional gender-orientated values

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<sup>714</sup> Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*, 117.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>716</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 1.

<sup>717</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 45.

central to its message.<sup>718</sup> Not only were “tales with heavy emphasis on feminine beauty much more likely to have survived” from their inception to more modern epochs, by virtue of the incessant normalisation of such superficial values, but they were invariably characterised by the featuring of ineffectual females whose survival is dependent on males.<sup>719</sup> <sup>720</sup> Andrea Dworkin has powerfully summarised that “for a woman to be good, she must be dead, or as close to it as possible”, cementing the attractiveness of an ideal by which females merely existed as an aesthetically-pleasing veneer of inactivity.<sup>721</sup>

Like Snow White, encased in a glass coffin through which her evergreen beauty could still be admired, ideas of female agency had no place when her greatest asset was as evident in death as in life, and whose state could and would only change upon the deliverance of true love’s kiss. Not only is she reliant upon the action of a male in order to ‘save’ her, reinforcing his strength and agency in contrast with her delicate passivity, but the only way in which this can be affected by her is through the allure of her feminine beauty, thereby fulfilling her gendered role of existing simply to secure a husband using her one tool of femaleness: beauty. Not only do such stories “reproduce and legitimise gender statuses” for the little girls and boys at whom they are aimed, but the frequent weaving of make-believe in amongst recognisable features of everyday life serves to imbue a child’s

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<sup>718</sup> Greg M. Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls: on the commodification of girlhood in Impressionist painting” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 109.

<sup>719</sup> Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz, “The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children’s Fairy Tales”. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (2003), 711.

<sup>720</sup> For example, Bluebeard’s wife is saved by her brothers-in-law, who kill the aristocrat before he dispatches his wife; Princess Aurora is woken from her comatose slumber by the loving kiss of Prince Philip; and Little Red Riding Hood, whilst indeed devoured by the wolf in some versions of the story, is only saved in others when a local woodcutter/huntsman slays the wolf with his axe.

<sup>721</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 42.

understanding of reality with discourses of fantasy, especially when accompanied by illustrations.<sup>722</sup>

For children, and adults to some extent, the words and pictures of our favourite books become so tightly interchangeable with our perceptions of the real world that the former becomes as much of a truth as the latter, functioning in a reciprocal dynamic which supports the norms that have created it. Patricia Holland usefully defines such norms as “patterns of expectation which sediment into a broader set of public meanings and become an active part of the mapping of social and political worlds, [producing] a set of narratives about childhood which are threaded through different cultural forms, drawing on every possible source to construct stories that become part of cultural competence [so that] these pictures become our pictures, these stories our stories.”<sup>723</sup>

Fairytales by their very nature adopt a timeless and moveable quality, the synonymously notable phrase of ‘once upon a time’ proving testament to their innate historical and geographical vagueness, which is then built upon with similarly ambiguous references throughout: “here once lived a man who owned grand houses.”<sup>724</sup> Such rootlessness of origin and setting suits the multi-century popularity they have enjoyed and which facilitated the ongoing cultural dissemination of their traditional, normative ideals. They are both appealingly steeped in tradition but somehow endlessly and conveniently applicable to the present day: “fairytales are a

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<sup>722</sup> Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 31.

<sup>723</sup> Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular imagery* (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), 3.

<sup>724</sup> Charles Perrault, “Bluebeard” quoted in Maria Tatar, ed., *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 147.

very special form of art: they may go back hundreds of years, but they are always contemporary.”<sup>725</sup>

Whilst Jack Zipes considers such longevity of popularity a result of Perrault’s unique style in bringing a modern approach to literature that combined comedy, adventure, romance, and morality, such powerful and steadfast acceptance was expedited somewhat further in nineteenth-century France by the accompaniment of illustrations, most prominently those of Gustave Doré (1832-1883).<sup>726</sup> Doré’s various engravings and prints produced between 1862 and 1883 to accompany multiple publications of Perrault’s beloved 1697 collection of fairytales *Histoires ou contes du temps passé (Stories or Fairytales from Times Past)*, proved a catalyst in the revival these traditional folktales enjoyed from this period onwards, in literature as well as in other entertainment formats.<sup>727</sup> Whilst some deem such fairytales and their illustrative accompaniments “purely escapist and nostalgic”, a whimsical antidote to the travails of modernity, or, taking a more feminist slant, as indicative on the part of Perrault and his fellow men of “a major crisis of

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<sup>725</sup> Denise M. Osborne, “Bluebeard and its multiple layers of meaning”, *Revista Alpha*, No. 12 (2014), 136.

<sup>726</sup> Jack Zipes, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 282.

<sup>727</sup> Publications and reprints of Perrault’s work include but are not limited to: J.R Planché’s translated and illustrated collection *Four and Twenty Fairy Tales* (1858); 1864 edition including Doré’s illustrations; a Librairie Hachette of Paris collection of *Contes de Fées (Fairy Tales)* (1878); Andrew Lang’s 1888 English translation *Perrault’s Popular Tales*; Charles Welsh’s 1901 translation *Tale of Mother Goose*, and A.E. Johnson’s 1921 translation *Old Time Stories told by Master Charles Perrault*. Adaptations of selected Perrault works include but are not limited to: *Barbe bleue (Bluebeard)* – pantomimes in the London’s Drury Lane Theatre Royal in 1798, 1879, and 1901; three-act operas in Paris in 1907 (Dukas), 1866, 1888, and 1904 (Offenbach, Helhac, and Halévy); a 1896 ballet in St. Petersburg (Petipa and Schenk); a short silent film in 1902 (Méliès); a 2011 Japanese animé series (*Fate-Zero*); a 2014 BBC Radio 4 adaptation; a Croatian theatre production in 2015, and American gothic horror film *Crimson Peak* in 2015; *La Belle au Bois Dormant (Sleeping Beauty)* – operas in Paris in 1825 (Carafa and de Planard) and 1828 (Hérolde), and Scribe’s ballet (1828); poetry by Tennyson in 1830; 1959 Disney animation, and 2014 blockbuster film *Maleficent; Cendrillon (Cinderella)* – operas in Paris in 1810 (Isouard and Etienne), 1899 (Massenet and Caïn), and 1904 (Viardot); two film versions in 1899 and 1912 by Méliès; 1950 Disney animation; Roger and Hammerstein musicals in 1957, 1965, and 1997, and a 2015 motion picture.



phallotocracy”, it remains the case that most modern scholarly interpretations do not underestimate the fairytale’s significance as an extremely powerful tool of acculturation.<sup>728 729</sup> Not only did illustrations naturally appeal to our human yearning for visual stimulus, especially for children not yet literate, but their accessibility and thus memorability arguably rendered them more effective still, operating as a “pictorial attempt to buttonhole the viewer [...] and trap them within a restricted field of meaning.”<sup>730</sup>

One of the major visual apparatuses by which such singular and readable messages were achieved was the use of chiaroscuro. Characterised by the exposure of stark contrast between light and shade in an artwork, Doré’s manipulation of chiaroscuro can be understood to function, both on literal and metaphorical levels, as a means by which to present the child with a ‘black and white’ world comprising easily-identifiable ‘rights and wrongs’ by which to live. Doré’s 1864 illustration for *Le petit chaperon rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*) (fig. 5.2) exemplifies this, depicting a diminutive little girl, glowing bright white with the purity of her innocent goodness, her skirt bathed in the shadow of the wolf, dark in colour and enormous in size by comparison, trapping her between his beastly body and the dense and mysterious darkness of the woods from whence he came. Little Red Riding Hood’s restriction in her environment is mirrored by the child viewer, who, drawn to the wide-eyed fear of the small child’s illuminated face, can clearly differentiate between the unsullied purity of her world, representative of ‘ours’, as bright and shiny as the pail she carries, and the gnarly tangle of opacity which

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<sup>728</sup> Karen E. Rowe, “Feminism and Fairy Tales” in Jack Zipes, *Don’t Bet on the Prince* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 211.

<sup>729</sup> Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 163.

<sup>730</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 5.

surrounds her, a muddled and unclear world separate and outside of hers and ours; the ‘Other’.

Such focus on difference is central to both fairytales and normative concepts of gender. In many ways, fairytales function on polarity, frequently adopting binary classifications of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ in order to impart simplistic views on far more complex issues, maximising on ‘black and white’ notions of opposition in stories as “a way to characterise elements in their lives as being either ‘good’ (we) or ‘evil’ (them), as well as trying to justify their actions.”<sup>731</sup> In tandem with an ongoing preoccupation with oversimplifying more multifaceted issues surrounding gender, fairytales offer an imaginatively-appealing and visually-captivating means by which to reinforce somewhat arbitrary and otherwise ungrounded ‘truths’ of society by virtue of their roots in the unquestionable rigidity of tradition.

Concepts of positioning and ‘otherness’ in general have proved pivotal to the establishment and bolstering of normative gender roles and difference. It was the nineteenth century in particular which “saw an increasing emphasis on sexual dimorphism: the physical dissimilarity between male and female forms”, an observation which was then worked upon and aggrandized by the perception of specific behaviours and habits as accentuating of these stated differences: females do feminine things, males do masculine things.<sup>732</sup>

Modern scholarship has endeavoured to underscore the arbitrariness of such distinctions; whilst Butler draws attention to the “anxiety about the truth of gender which seizes on this or that toy, this or that proclivity of dress, the size of the shoulder, the leanness of the body”, Mary Holmes goes further, offering an

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<sup>731</sup> Osborne, “Bluebeard”, 130.

<sup>732</sup> Timm and Sanborn, *Shaping of Modern Europe*, 174.

alternative binary of ‘big ears’ and ‘small ears’ as an example, for her, as similarly ridiculous and without foundation as our sex-gender standard.<sup>733 734</sup> Nevertheless, it remains the case that “it is the meaning of *difference* which is a central feature in the production of any sign system”, and which gives rise to a patriarchal positioning that Paechter describes as “the dualistic division between male as subject and female as negated Other.”<sup>735 736</sup>

This typical elevation of the male and masculine to the detriment of the female and feminine is betrayed by its innate reciprocity. Just like colonial standpoints relied upon a relational dynamic of ‘we are good, and they are different so they must be bad’ that allowed “Europeans [to be] ‘civilised’ because there was a world full of the ‘uncivilised’”, sex-gender models are much the same: “‘masculinity’ does not exist except in contrast to ‘femininity.’”<sup>737 738</sup> In turn, the prevalence of such oppositional theory at this time relies upon its period’s preoccupation with appearance. Whilst this was rooted in emphasis on sexual dimorphism, it petered out to and manifested itself most prominently in a focus on more general physical differences which then contributed to a collection of behaviours and practices born of what is perceived to be a tightly-bound sex-gender dynamic. As with other complex issues, emphasis is firmly placed upon not what occurs within and can be articulated with varying success, but on what can clearly be seen and thus deemed absolute, allowing these observations to colour understandings of the whole.

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<sup>733</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 70.

<sup>734</sup> Mary Holmes, *Gender and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 15-16.

<sup>735</sup> Walkerdine, “Femininity as Performance”, 271.

<sup>736</sup> Paechter, *Being Boys, Being Girls*, 2.

<sup>737</sup> Timm and Sanborn, *Shaping of Modern Europe*, 97.

<sup>738</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 68.

Accordingly, compounded by the inextricable relational dynamic of gender, an outside-in approach is adopted, allowing normative perceptions of the outermost veneer to soak through to the very core, and never the other way round: “if masculinity and femininity may both be seen as defences against the qualities held by any other, then there can be no natural division of the sexes, but a complex order through which difference is held on play.”<sup>739</sup>

It seems particularly apt, therefore, that such a practice permeated the work of leading Impressionist artists. Whilst this was a movement perhaps most typically characterised by paintings produced *en plein air*, unusual and non-academic interpretations of the natural world, it was similarly prolific in its creation of domestic and urban scenes, a number of which represent young children. What unified these works lay in their namesake, for their rejection of naturalistic and mimetic depictions in favour of imbued perceptions provided for a collection of pictorial *impressions* perhaps surprisingly akin to the preoccupation with the visual that was characteristic of the period in general. It is germane, here, to make clear that in the discussion and analysis of these *impressions* of little boys and girls, of masculinity and femininity as embodied in the toy-child, that I, like feminist art historian Norma Broude, “use the terms ‘masculinist’ and ‘feminist’ in this context to describe modes of thought that, in the first case derive from, and in the second case respond to, a patriarchal social structure”.<sup>740</sup>

In a fashion symbolic of nineteenth-century gender hierarchy, this exploration of visual representations of toy-children shall commence by first looking

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<sup>739</sup> Walkerdine, “Femininity as Performance”, 276.

<sup>740</sup> Norma Broude. “Degas and French Feminism, ca. 1880: ‘The Young Spartans’, the Brothel Monotypes, and the Bathers Revisited”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (1988), 651.

to the little boy, a cast with all the potential to become the perfect ambassador of manhood and masculinity. It is interesting to note here, as discussed more comprehensively in Chapter One, that articulations of childhood, youth, and adulthood, and more specifically the distinguishing or conflating fusion thereof, leave some degree of imprecision with regards to limitations of classification. This issue re-emerges here when we consider that despite the establishment of sex-gender distinctions from birth, the subjugation of any child by adults meant that the outstanding advantages of maleness and masculinity were not necessarily immediately bestowed and felt. Not only did fashions of the period mean that “boys commonly dressed like girls until the age of five”, offering some suggestion of an age by which gendered considerations on appearance began to take effect in earnest, but “young males [were] in danger of becoming feminised because they too [stood] in a subordinate relation to adult male power [and] a feminised boy may risk losing his claims to masculinity.”<sup>741</sup> <sup>742</sup>

Little boys were, in this way, operating in yet another field of no-man’s-land which characterised childhood, for the tightness of the relational dynamic of male and female, masculine and feminine, hinged upon a reciprocity that dictated that any ‘Other’ to the masculine/male must be feminine/female. Such was the haste therefore, spurred by “the paranoia of the powerful [that] keeps it in circulation”, to ensure the efficient insertion of the little boy into his normative masculinist role well in time for adulthood.<sup>743</sup> Beginning from a young age, boys were initiated into the

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<sup>741</sup> Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls”, 109.

<sup>742</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 195.

<sup>743</sup> Walkerdine, “Femininity as Performance”, 269.

“valuable masculine world, [from] which [...] women are excluded” through a careful alignment of the child with his toy ideal.<sup>744</sup>

Whilst dolls in their typical sense are generally associated with little girls, they existed too, although alternatively, in the little boy’s toy trunk. Pierre-August Renoir’s (1841-1919) *Garçon avec un petit soldat* (*Boy with a Toy Soldier*) (1875) (fig. 5.3) demonstrates this. This simple portrait of a young boy features the child against a plain backdrop of olive-brown, dressed in a smart white suit, decorated with blue trim and buttons, his richly dark eyes strikingly illuminated as he gazes out of the frame, bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked, just as he should be. The little boy is gripping a toy soldier, an archetypal signifier of both masculinity and patriotism. Boasting a clear, easily-identifiable outfit of red, black, white and gold, the miniature military man stands out as an unmistakable symbol of masculine dominance against an otherwise largely softened painting. The combination of the soldier’s red and the little boy’s blue and white is suggestive of the French *tricolore*, whilst the inky, black shine of the soldier’s head attire is matched only by the glassiness of the child’s unflinching eyes.

Whilst in more modern times, “the young toughie has become the regular face of an engaging boyhood”, the French long-nineteenth century was an epoch fascinated instead with a sense of order and discipline which dictated that the toughness and bravery of boys in training for manhood had to be of a more regulated nature.<sup>745</sup> A focus on military roles had plethoric effects; not only did it lend itself well to the regimented process by which little boys were to be transformed into men,

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<sup>744</sup> Richard Drake Mohr, “Knights, Young Men, Boys: Masculine Worlds and Democratic Values”, *Noûs*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1991), 202.

<sup>745</sup> Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 197.

but it offered a dualistic dimension to the vision for a modern France, symbolic of both the global prowess for which the nation yearned, as well as the mechanical uniformity to which this increasingly industrial world had become accustomed and against whose standards of efficiency and order it was measured.

It is poignant that the rise of the machine that is synonymous with both burgeoning modernity and the resultant decline of the 'person' is reflected as much in toys as it was in industry on a larger scale: "the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mark the heyday of the automaton, just as they mark the mechanisation of labour."<sup>746</sup> The paradoxical nature of automata is too reflected in its industrial cousins. The design of the automaton as an imitation of the human is a flattering nod to humanity's capacities and functions, yet through both its uncanny mimicry and operative rigidity, it simultaneously renders people obsolete, removing the need for the actual human touch which drives most toys, in much the same way that the industrial revolution's drive for mechanised labour begot mass unemployment. Furthermore, the replacement of man with machine pointed to a wider problem of a neglect of feeling and personhood by which the gendered upbringing of children was constituted.

Whilst France's acceleration in the production and marketing of toys in the nineteenth century was purported to be in service of "le règne des enfants", during which every frivolity of each prince and princess is dutifully satiated, it was in reality part of a much grander scheme of national elevation against global

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<sup>746</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 57.

competition.<sup>747</sup> Pressure from Japanese technological advancements and the cheap efficiency of German toy production saw France position itself at the very forefront of “the quality end of the market”, establishing bespoke, independent toy shops, as well as regional toy fairs inspired by the spectacles of the Expositions.<sup>748 749</sup> In contrast to Émile Zola’s (1840-1902) judgement of the French toy industry functioning as a means by which to “conquérir la mère par l’enfant”, it seems the converse was true.<sup>750</sup> Far more than mere playthings, toys constitute a constant and identifiable part of the material culture and record of society, and should be considered as such. Instead of knick-knacks of childish whim, toys are artefacts by which we glean an insight into parental behaviours, for they function as “by-products of parents’ attempts to instil values into their children.”<sup>751</sup>

Accordingly, not only did the popularity of automata and similar toys reflect the adult-centricity of the period, but also the enormous appeal of toys which afforded greater control to adults. This was a consumer culture “that respected the past, mechanical innovation and utilitarian objects, and consequently, adult concepts of what was fun and what a toy should be”, thereby operating as both a self-gratifying celebration of man’s industrial achievements, and a particularly effective means by which adult authority over children could be exercised.<sup>752</sup> Such was the worship of artifice and spectacle which consumed adults, and not the fascination

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<sup>747</sup> Edouard Fournier, *Histoire des Jouets et des Jeux d’Enfants* (Paris : E. Dentu, 1889), 1. Translation: “the reign of children”.

<sup>748</sup> “French Toy Industry”, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 67, No. 3486 (1919): 663.

<sup>749</sup> Burton, “Design History”, 7-9.

<sup>750</sup> Émile Zola. *Au Bonheur des dames* (Montreal: La Bibliothèque électronique de Québec, Collection “À tous les vents”, Vol. 65, Ver. 2.0, 1998), 491. Translates to mean: “to conquer the mother by the child”.

<sup>751</sup> L.A. Wilkie, “Not merely child’s play: creating a historical archaeology of children and childhood” in *Children and Material Culture*, ed. J.S Derevenski, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 10.

<sup>752</sup> G. Cross. *Kid’s stuff: toys and the changing world of American childhood*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 25-26.



with the intrinsic nature of things by which children were enamoured, that attention was “focused on the instruments or accessories of games much more than on their nature, their character, their laws, the instincts that they involve, the satisfactions that they secure”, contributing to a veneer-deep vision of society which perpetuated the toy-child model.<sup>753</sup>

Not only was the child restricted by adult design as to the availability of a certain type of toy, a humanoid sort to which the child could be moulded, transformed into the toy soldier, constrained by his mechanisms or the linear woodenness of his polished limbs, but the inflexible functionality of such a toy contributed to the upbringing of unyielding regimentation to which he would be subjected: “the form of the mechanical toy [...] ensured that there could be no room for alternative forms of play facilitated by the child’s imagination. The mechanism of these toys was such that the mechanical parts create a rigidity of function, as each part of the mechanism fit together in a precise and specific way to produce a desired action, and no other action or output besides that intended by the manufacturer was possible.”<sup>754</sup>

Furthermore, whilst the robotic function of automata and neat stiffness of toy soldiers provided a standard of military precision to which the little boy should strive, the association of such technology and craftsmanship with masculine toys also contributed on another layer to the emphasis of a gendered upbringing, for not only did toys often “define society’s perception of technical things [but] technical toys defined who was predestined to handle technology (and who was not).”<sup>755</sup> This

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<sup>753</sup> Roger Caillois quoted in Burton, “Design History”, 5.

<sup>754</sup> Barton and Somerville, “Play Things”, 53.

<sup>755</sup> Schleinker, “Rehearsed Technology”, 36.

offers an alternative slant to the assertion that “toys reflect reality”, for whilst they correspond to the development of a society, especially considering that new technological developments frequently appeared in toy form, serving as a mediator in people’s comprehension and familiarity with modernity, they also operate under the same social guidelines, indicating the masculinity of industry, with mechanised toys targeted at boys and deemed too complex for girls.<sup>756</sup>

Above all, the popularity and success of such a toy rested on its ability to “reproduce all details of its real-life [and to] model by its physical appearance, by its material and also by its versatility and mobility.”<sup>757</sup> Such toys were produced in droves, and being that “their eventual ubiquity reflects both a fascination with novelty and mechanical innovation,” we can begin to appreciate the reciprocal alliance by these two factors were combined.<sup>758</sup> The fetishisation of the toy-child, the aspiration to create the perfect miniature, both inspired and was facilitated by the technological developments of the day. Correspondingly, they were as equal in celebration as they were in responsibility, for this unquenchable desire in the nineteenth century to “stimulate life by mechanical means” ultimately led to a blurring of the distinctions thereof, producing an unfathomable entanglement of the two, a commonly and positively received conflation of life and machine which gave rise to the popular image and concept of the toy-child.<sup>759</sup>

In his essay “‘Pinocchio’ or a Masculine Upbringing”, Jean-Marie Apostolides entertains a similar concept, characterising the process of upbringing as one that almost forcibly transformed young boys, like puppets, into the toys with

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<sup>756</sup> Claude Jeanmaire quoted in Schleizer, “Rehearsed Technology”, 20.

<sup>757</sup> Schleizer, “Rehearsed Technology”, 35.

<sup>758</sup> Barton and Somerville, “Play Things”, 53.

<sup>759</sup> S.A. Bedini, “The role of automata in the history of technology”, *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 5 (1964), 24.

which they obediently played: “this metamorphosis is not a natural one; it is an acknowledgement by society and depends partially on the marionette’s will to behave like a ‘regular little boy’”.<sup>760</sup> In some sort of twisted version of Carlo Collodi’s classic tale in which a wooden puppet dreams of becoming a real boy, the little boy of French society is rendered a peculiar amalgamation of the two, for as the “early impertinences of the puppet” must be ridded from this child-marionette, his woodenness and unsteadiness, guided only by the strings of the adult puppeteer, are slowly worked upon and eased into the smooth and proper movements of a real little boy, a carefully whittled version of his former self: “in order to bridge the gap [between boy and man], the child had to be trained like an animal, controlled in every particular like a puppet.”<sup>761</sup>

Apostolidès’ specific choice of Pinocchio by which to compare the toy-child is particularly poignant given the character’s famous propensity to tell lies; he is, in this way, exposing the falsehood by which these performing puppet children were forced to live. Edouard Manet’s (1832-1883) work *Le Fifre (The Fifer)* (1866) (fig. 5.4) offers a product of this marionette-boy transformation, for it is almost as though Renoir’s *Garçon* has become a humanoid version of the toy soldier he is holding. In some capacity demonstrative of Susan Stewart’s concept of the “juxtaposition of microcosmic and macrocosmic images” in the world of children and toys, this refers back to the notion of the child functioning as a miniature version in the adult world, and then in turn the toy as a smaller version within the child’s.<sup>762</sup> Whilst the adult-centricity of the toy-child existence does not afford the autonomy that Stewart

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<sup>760</sup> Jean-Marie Apostolidès, “Pinocchio, or a Masculine Upbringing”, *Merveilles & contes*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1988): 75.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>762</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 64.

recognises as central to her models of the anterior, interior, and exterior worlds of play, it nevertheless points to the complex structure and relationship of “within within within” characteristic of the toy-child dynamic.<sup>763</sup>

Manet’s *Fifre*, this uniformed, regimental flautist, is presented against a plain background whose indistinguishable planes prevent the viewer from making any accurate estimation of his size. This boy, poised to play, has no discernible surroundings in which to situate him, allowing the viewer maximum freedom in anticipating his story and personhood, or lack thereof. The ambiguity of his dimensions contributes to this, offering a figure that is at once a child, a soldier, a puppet and a toy. His small, dimpled hands combined with his soft, ruddy complexion betray his youth as he stands clad in military regalia. Unlike the impasto technique popular with artists of the period, Manet has opted for clear, often rather flat, bold colour, with dark, emphatic outlines, generating a rather decorative quality, his eyes steadfast not with emotive intensity but the vacant glassiness of a polished toy. Add to this the boy’s anonymity, and we are presented with not an individual, but what seems to be a model, a sort of ornamental advertisement for patriotic boyhood.

The dark solidity of the torso and waxy, bisque-like pallor of the face and hands, contrasting against the soft drapes of the fulsome trousers combine to suggest a typical marionette with a sturdy core and floppy limbs. One can easily imagine the presence of delicate threads attached to the head, arms, and legs, with the ability to move his pipe to and from his lips at will, and position his foot out-turned to one side, as shown, with a sort of uncanny nonchalance. This peculiar, jaunty sort of

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<sup>763</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 61.

personality associated with the toy-child is similar to that frequently assumed of popular marionettes at theatrical or pantomime performances. These hand-operated forerunners to the automaton, whose often puerile sense of humour ostensibly appealed to children, became increasingly popular amongst adults who were enamoured by the witty satire.

This may be surprising, given the sacerdotal roots of marionettes as jointed statues of gods in ancient Egypt over two thousand years ago, but the work of master puppeteer Jean Brioché firmly established marionette shows as a prominent form of entertainment in Paris by the mid-seventeenth century, aided by the enthusiasm of celebrated playwright Molière, whose propagation of puppetry confirmed its standing as a major form of theatrical performance as opposed to an amateur sideshow.<sup>764 765</sup> Following initial success with shows featuring Polichinelle, the French version of the Italian character known to Anglophone audiences as Punch, Lyon dentist Laurent Mourguet created Guignol in 1808, a character whose enormous success both on stage and in multiple literary publications throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in his name becoming synonymous with marionettes and puppet shows in general across France and beyond. Accounts vary as to whether the name was derived from the old French word “guignolant” meaning “drôle”, or from “guign’oeil” meaning he “qui louche”, but it is now a term used in modern French to denote both a simple glove puppet and a foolish person or clown.<sup>766 767</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> J. Levieu, “Marionettes”, *The Lotus Magazine*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1918), 189.

<sup>765</sup> Suzanne Cros, “Le Véritable Guignol Lyonnais”, *The French Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1933), 39.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid., 42. “Drôle” and “qui louche” translate from French to mean “funny” and “who squints/is cross-eyed”, respectively.

<sup>767</sup> “Guignol”, ‘WordReference.com’, <http://www.wordreference.com/fren/guignol> (accessed 21st September 2016).

For many in France, Guignol is a miniature, humanoid embodiment of childish revelry: “qui de nous n’a pas gardé de son enfance quelque souvenir innocent et charmant d’une représentation de Guignol?”<sup>768</sup> However, whilst the drollery of the marionette remains steadfast, it exists alongside an underlying eeriness, especially when considered in tandem with the concept of the toy-child. Like the ‘black and white’ dogmatism of normative gender statutes which are at the very root of the toy-child model, on a more metaphorical level, the bright white of childish innocence with which the marionette may be traditionally associated is inevitably counterbalanced by a more foreboding darkness. Like the child which begins to become them, puppets and marionettes are both miniature humans and decidedly non-human, for whilst they “can be very lifelike, [...] the best puppets should not just imitate human beings but add something of their own.”<sup>769</sup>

Transcending the obedient model of the toy-child as cast by the adult hand, the puppet has the potential to engage more independently with “darker sides of identity and being human”, uncovering the possibility for a sort of ‘malfunctioning’ of what is normally a well-oiled toy-child.<sup>770</sup> More generally, though, the dualistic image of the marionette is one which ultimately points to the unnaturalness, complexity and eventual impossibility of the perfect toy-child, for whilst “marionettes often achieve the impossible, [...] not all things are possible to the marionettes.”<sup>771</sup> For perhaps even more so than in the case of automata, puppets seem to transcend their material existence, not least in their embodiment of the in-

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<sup>768</sup> Cros, “Guignol Lyonnais”, 39. Translation: “who of us has not kept from our childhood some innocent and charming memory of a Guignol performance?”

<sup>769</sup> George Speaight, “Puppets and Their History”, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 124, No. 5237 (1976), 254.

<sup>770</sup> Alissa Mello, “The World of Puppet Theatre”, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2010), 64.

<sup>771</sup> W.J. Lawrence, “Marionette Operas”, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1924), 236.

between, a halfway-house between the static doll and the automaton, a Pinocchio-esque half-toy-half-child. Virtually invisible strings contribute to the image of the marionette's apparent inner agency, as being that "they are not machines [...] they are full of surprises – the accidental and irregular is part of their charm", as is their semblant capacity to oftentimes evade the boundaries of human law: "there is a sense of the eternal about all puppets [...] Who shall ever say he has mastered a puppet [when] they have been everywhere and seen everything[?]"<sup>772</sup> Whilst they often served as a fashionable model by which adults hoped to mould their children, marionettes simultaneously betrayed the difficulties and dangers therein, for their very lifelikeness undid their desired effect.

Whilst founded upon and constructive of almost identical principles and effects, the specifics of the toy-child model implementation by their very nature were defined by normative gender stipulations. Accordingly, even as toys, females were, "to adopt Simone de Beauvoir's classic terms, the Other for the male Subject," that is to say, exalt and exhibit the sort of passivity, dependency, and weakness considered inherently feminine by virtue of its antithesis to the unquestionable masculine traits of agency, independence, and strength.<sup>773</sup> Unlike the hardy, mobile, and purposeful boy toy-child, the little girl would become a delicate and ornamental doll of bisque, porcelain, or china, an ideal version of this "frail and fragile object of wardship."<sup>774</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Mills, "Creative Work", 471-472.

<sup>773</sup> Rowe, "Feminism and Fairy Tales", 209. In the French nineteenth century, a married woman was considered a minor, over 40% of French women were illiterate and therefore excluded from education, and those who found employment had to settle for unskilled work for which they were paid less than half of their male counterparts. William Fortescue. *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 83-96.

<sup>774</sup> Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*, 147.

In his 1884 painting *L'après-midi des enfants à Wargemont* (*Children's Afternoon at Wargemont*) (fig. 5.5), Renoir constructs the masculinist voyeur's dream, an idyllic arrangement of three sisters of varying ages, like dolls in a choice of three sizes. Renoir emphasises the peaceful insignificance of these toy-children, these girl-dolls, by camouflaging them in the safe, internal environment of the room, enhancing the notion of "the intimate private family living in healthy harmony within an enclosed space of nature".<sup>775</sup> The girl on the left of the artwork in particular virtually becomes part of the décor and furniture of the room; dressed in shades of blue and white and holding a blue book, she becomes absorbed by the settee upon which she is propped, her chambray skirt fanning out into the navy stripes of the upholstery, which in turn blends into the painted woodwork behind her. Like a lampshade or cushion, it seems she has been selected as an accessory to match the room. Similarly, the girl on the right, dressed in reddish tones and with a plait of auburn hair, is sat before a predominantly copper-coloured backdrop.

Far from individuals in their own right, these girl-dolls are a decorative, ornamental feature of a blissful home, "put on display as a commodity of bourgeois culture, signifying wealth, leisure and domesticity."<sup>776</sup> Like a collector's doll too precious and delicate to be played with or taken outdoors, the entire existence of the little girl was not only limited to the familial home, but founded upon "a generic cuteness that helps code the entire realm of the domestic as a feminine complement to the masculine world of labour, culture and ownership."<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> Thomas, "Impressionist Dolls", 112.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., 109.



It is perhaps the youngest sister in the centre of the image who is most significant; she “gazes aside with a blankness, a reflective shield of prettiness, that makes her appear more an ideal type than a living individual”, a child-toy, a girl-doll with mould-cast face carefully painted.<sup>778</sup> In another manifestation of Stewart’s notion of the “real world miniaturised or giganticised”, this youngest sister, the smallest of the three dolls, is in fact holding a doll even more diminutive than she, whose general appearance is startlingly similar to her own.<sup>779</sup> In a style demonstrative of the “masculinist gendering of the viewer and maker”, Renoir seems to have painted the child’s face in much the same way as the doll’s, contributing to this ongoing conflation of the two.<sup>780</sup> Not only did “dolls [have] a powerful influence in helping to internalise, on an unprecedented scale, stereotyped role models”, but they became synonymous with the child herself, whereby no discernible distinction, neither in visual nor material culture, could be made between the two.<sup>781</sup>

In this way, Renoir’s painting may be understood as if one were looking into a dollhouse, a giant’s-eye-view through the pane of a tiny window into the perfect idyll of the miniature. Drawing upon the literature of Henrik Ibsen, Stewart has studied in length the “dominant motifs [of] wealth and nostalgia” which permeate the “adult amusement” of the dollhouse, all of which contribute to the theme of adult-centricity which pervades this chapter, and indeed this thesis; such a notion of the adult surveillance and control and even destruction of the child’s world giving

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<sup>778</sup> Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls”, 107.

<sup>779</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 57.

<sup>780</sup> Susan P. Casteras, “Winged fantasies: constructions of childhood, innocence, adolescence, and sexuality in Victorian fairy painting” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 129.

<sup>781</sup> Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls”, 105.

rise again to the image of the “dollhouse [...] consumed by the eye” of the giant.<sup>782</sup>

Whilst Stewart’s argument goes on in more depth to explore the significance of the dollhouse in perceptions of inner and outer spheres of experience, a concept unpacked in the following chapter, it is pertinent too to acknowledge that if “the toy world presents a projection of the world of everyday life”, the static ornament of the dollhouse, a toy so often accompanied by exclamations of ‘be careful!’ and ‘don’t touch that!’ serves to represent not only the miniaturised novelty of the toy-child world, but also one which, like real life, is completely under adult design and control.<sup>783</sup>

This steadfast conflation of real and model, original and miniature, child and toy, resulted in the amplification around lifelike toys of Freud’s concept of the ‘uncanny’, hinging upon the crux that “the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.”<sup>784</sup> In his introduction to Freud’s essay on the subject, Hugh Haughton states that “the essay on the uncanny interprets the uncanny as a return”.<sup>785</sup> Freud’s work both investigates and takes the form of a return; not only is it a return to a previous essay of his own, as well as a return to Ernst Jentsch’s paper on the same subject, but the very nature of the uncanny as he understands it relies upon some sort of revelatory return.<sup>786</sup> Essentially, “the uncanny is in some way a species of the familiar”, insofar as there

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<sup>782</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 61-62.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>784</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Publishing, 2003), 124.

<sup>785</sup> Hugh Haughton, “Introduction”, in Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Publishing, 2003), viiii.

<sup>786</sup> Ernst Jentsch (1867-1919) was a German psychiatrist whose 1906 work *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* first established the notion of the uncanny and influenced Freud’s later essay on the same subject.

must be an element of the familiar in order for the effective distortion of normality that is the uncanny to render itself successfully.<sup>787</sup>

By returning to Freud's native tongue of German, this can be elucidated more clearly. 'Uncanny' in German is 'unheimlich', which literally translates to mean 'unhomely', as 'heim' means 'home' and 'heimlich' is 'homely'.

Correspondingly, both linguistically and figuratively, the uncanny has within it something of the familiarity of the home, but rather than being completely turned on its head, it is subtly warped so that its homeliness lingers as a disturbing, everyday undercurrent. Being that "its otherness was once sameness, its strangeness disguising its primordial familiarity", the uncanny relies upon a return to the familiar, a familiar that has been inexplicably distorted.<sup>788</sup> Like the toy-child who is remarkably human yet also strikingly toy-like, this eerie loitering of the familiar is ultimately where the sense of repetition, or return, is born; different images, events and situations become uncannily linked by the repetition of a familiar element coupled with the uneasy twang of difference or inconsistency.

It is probably Freud's incorporation of major aspects of the Jentschian uncanny which resonates most strongly with the specific image of the toy-child, however. Whilst maintaining the uncanny foundation of warped familiarity, Freud introduced Jentsch's concept of "doubt as to whether an apparently animate object is alive and, conversely, whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate".<sup>789</sup> Freud's study of E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1817 text *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman*), in

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<sup>787</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, 134.

<sup>788</sup> Jeffrey Gray, "'It's Not Natural': Freud's 'Uncanny' and O'Connor's 'Wise Blood'", *The Southern Literary Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1996): 67.

<sup>789</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, 135.

particular the figure of “the seemingly animate doll Olimpia” exposes this Jentschian facet of the uncanny.<sup>790</sup>

The principal character of Nathaneal becomes besotted with his tutor’s beautiful yet bizarrely one-dimensional daughter, Olimpia, who turns out to be a lifelike automaton. He is at once enthralled and disturbed by her incorporation of both human and mechanic mannerisms; her eyes appear unblinking yet bright, her awareness of music deft yet her dancing robotically rhythmic. The effect of intermittent movements of body shared by the toy-child, automata, marionettes, and Hoffmann’s Olimpia is summarised by Freud as similar to witnessing a performance of “feet that dance by themselves, [a] manifestation of forces that he did not suspect in a fellow human being”.<sup>791</sup> Whilst the original text was published in German, the impact of its themes across Europe can be found in the story’s effective mediation to French audiences in the late-nineteenth century through the ballet *Coppélia*, which, based upon Charles-Louis-Étienne Nutter’s *libretto* and *mise-en-scène* derived from Hoffmann’s story, premiered at the Paris Opera in 1870 and enjoyed widespread popularity thereafter.

It is during this time that French toy manufacturer *Jumeau* was at its height of success with its eponymous bisque doll (fig. 5.6), having begun production in the early 1840s and enjoyed its heyday between the 1870s and 1890s. This perfect miniature, “costumed in imitation of the most elegantly dressed adults so that [...] the little girl could imagine herself grown up” became the perfect model of the female toy-child.<sup>792</sup> Immaculately coiffed, stylishly adorned, with bright,

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<sup>790</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, 136.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>792</sup> Constance Eileen King, *Jumeau* (Atiglen: Schiffer Publishing, 1983), 10.

unflinching eyes, soothing mutism and reassuring stillness, the early *Jumeau* doll was “as placid and perfect as the parent wished the child to be.”<sup>793</sup> Similarly, the porcelain complexion, delicate rosy cheeks and alert glassy eyes of Renoir’s infant models, combined with their lifeless, ornamental positioning in the home, their static embodiment of “the prevalence of the doll type as a visual standard of children shows that children – girls especially – were being commodified as an essential element of bourgeois spectacle.”<sup>794</sup> This was enhanced by the connotations carried by the *Jumeau* name, which, translating from French to mean ‘twin’, suggested not only the degree of imitation between the doll and the child, but a strong sense of novelty that not only appealed to a commercial buyer, but also to adults with the propensity to view and treat their children as miniature collectables.

Renoir’s 1881 painting *Pink and Blue* (fig. 5.7), a portrait of Alice and Elisabeth, the daughters of Jewish French banker Louis Raphaël Cahen d’Anvers, depicts such connotations. Whilst the unique *Jumeau* design made it “possible for the figure to stand unaided”, it was an unnaturalistic posture (fig. 5.8), much like the awkward and stiff positioning of the Cahen d’Anver sisters, as if balanced according to their peculiar weighting, the unyielding moulding of their hands locked together to bind the doll girls in place, their heads turned on an unnatural angle, their eyes fixed yet unfocused.<sup>795</sup> Although not twins, the resemblance between the two girls is palpable, and emphasised by their complimentary outfits. Like a pair of little *Jumeau* dolls, the sisters are presented to the spectator in matching outfits, differentiated only by the pink or blue embellishments, as if to offer the consumer a

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<sup>793</sup> King, *Jumeau*, 92.

<sup>794</sup> Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls”, 104.

<sup>795</sup> King, *Jumeau*, 40.

choice of colour, or indeed the complete set of two: like “a kind of fetish-like luxury item, [...] these children are like commodities on a store shelf, the shiniest of many luxury goods”.<sup>796</sup>

Like on a swatch of different colour ways, or a display of various size options, these sisters are presented as if from the very same mould, their core identically formed and vacuous, their glazed faces from the very same paint pot, the twin-set a veritable collector’s item. Their duplicative form betrayed their falseness, for in this way they bore “little resemblance to actual people, but again suggest an idealised child.”<sup>797</sup> Accordingly, no allowance was made for the potential for peculiarities of inner workings, so to speak, for just as the “female body [was] physically constrained, moulded and shaped into forms considered appropriately feminine”, this girl-doll was herself similarly contrived, for with “concentration on a purely superficial effect, [...] the French child was herself something of a curiosity”, not least by virtue of her complex conflation with the likes of the *Jumeau* doll model.<sup>798 799</sup>

This conflation and confusion was magnified as a result of the ongoing developments in toy production afforded to *Jumeau*’s constant torrent of new styles and versions of doll from the 1870s onwards. Technological developments were particularly prominent, with “their moving eyes, the occasional speaking mechanism and their good articulation, [offering] a sometimes almost disturbing affinity with living things.”<sup>800</sup> This was amplified by the expectation of the modern consumer

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<sup>796</sup> Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls”, 107-108.

<sup>797</sup> King, *Jumeau*, 54.

<sup>798</sup> Gail Reekie, “Decently Dressed? Sexualised Consumerism and the Working Woman’s Wardrobe 1918-1923”, *Labour History*, No. 61 (1991), 48.

<sup>799</sup> King, *Jumeau*, 72.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

who had become accustomed to experiencing in real life these tangible manifestations of what had previously only existed in the mind's eye, for technology "created a fairyland environment, the sense of being, not in a distant place, but in a make-believe place where obedient genies leap to their master's command, where miracles of speed and motion are wrought by the slightest gesture, where a landscape of glowing pleasure domes and twinkling lights stretches into infinity."<sup>801</sup> Such was the apparent authenticity of the *Jumeau* doll towards which the little girl strived, ironically moulding herself to the perceived perfect form of a figure celebrated for its own comparability to human life, that the child often became "convinced that her dolls were bound to come to life if she looked at them in a certain way, as intently as possible"; like a pair of inseparable sisters or friends, they had become one and the same.<sup>802</sup>

This was augmented both in realism and eeriness with the introduction of the *Jumeau Triste* (fig. 5.9), whose "hauntingly mysterious face" offered a pretence of emotion darkly suggestive of the melancholy child trapped within the pristine shell of the doll they have been forced to become.<sup>803</sup> Testament to this is the great popularity this particular doll proved to be, treasured by customers and collectors alike for its perceived aesthetic delicacy and naturalistic beauty, with no regard for the forlornness and sorrow its expression suggests lies within. Whilst poet Rainer Maria Rilke has commented upon the profound anxiety suffered by the child who encounters with much confusion the "terrible unresponsiveness of the child's doll to the efforts its owner makes", this can instead be contested as indicative of the toy-

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<sup>801</sup> Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1992), 85.

<sup>802</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, 141.

<sup>803</sup> King, *Jumeau*, 14. "Triste" translates from French to mean "sad".

child's own deep-rooted agency and feeling, as evidence of the unhappy child within whose transformation and encasement in impossibly unfaltering polished bisque remains a person not always eager to play along.<sup>804</sup>

This marks a return again, like the uncanny, to the 'twin' symbolism of the *Jumeau* terminology, namely in its connection to what Freud termed "the idea of the 'double'".<sup>805</sup> Freud describes his own experience of being alarmed at having stumbled upon a stranger in his home, but then realising "to his own astonishment, that 'the intruder was my own image, reflected in the mirror of the connecting door'".<sup>806</sup> This particular experience has something of the gothic about it, similar to the notion of the 'doppelgänger' employed by Edgar Allan Poe when describing his hallucinatory eponymous character William Wilson, who finds "on running his opponent through, that he is alone and bleeding before a great mirror."<sup>807</sup>

In other words, this concept of doubling points to the power of conflation central to the toy-child concept; such is the extent to which these boy-marionettes and girl-dolls are both child and toy, they become one and the same. The bright shininess of the toy-child exterior hides a darkness within. Beneath the magnificently humanoid exterior of the talking *Jumeau Bébé Phonographe* lies a troublingly cold and robotic mechanism where her heart should be, a perfectly rectangular doorway into a mysteriously dark orifice of artifice (fig. 5.10). Similarly, in place of the toy-child's colourful mind lies a soulless vacuity housing only a large, central stringing coil (fig. 5.11) which, symbolic of the strain to conform under which the performing toy-child is placed, holds in place "a series of hooks and

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<sup>804</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke quoted in Hopkins, *Childish Things*, 11.

<sup>805</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, 141.

<sup>806</sup> Haughton, "Introduction", 1.

<sup>807</sup> Fred Botting, *Gothic* (Oxford: Routledge, 1996), 121.



springs that put the figure under continual pressure.”<sup>808</sup> Not only did this creation and maintenance of the toy-child, in concept, image, and reality, produce a soulless being ridded of personhood, a figure existing as a mere shadow of its former self, but it also served to augment a sort of pseudo-reality in which reality and fiction, truth and fallacy, can no longer be clearly distinguished. Perplexed by “the shocking sight of his own alienated features” – am I child or am I toy? – the child enters an often unrecognisable world not firmly rooted in reality.<sup>809</sup>

The combination of the uncanny repetition and difference of a warped reality alongside the intermingling of the human with the otherworldly establishes a profound sense of doubt and ambiguity that can be found mirrored in and buttressed by the bones of Freud’s own work on the subject: “There’s an uncertainty about the very form of the essay itself [...] it is a strange amalgam of different genres. It cannot quite make up its mind what it is”.<sup>810</sup> Just as Hoffmann’s *Sandman* creeps into bedrooms and steals the eyes of watchful children, the depth of confusion born of the toy-child conflation rids the child of ‘normal vision’ and replaces it instead with an unfathomable pseudo-reality: “such liability between fantasy and reality [that] fantasy has invaded reality.”<sup>811</sup> Whilst this is a notion at the very heart of the theory of the uncanny, it extends beyond those parameters and into the realm of imagination and perception in the world of child’s play. Ironically therefore, it is through the most profound efforts of acculturation and enforcement of normative gender roles that adults have, not without first debasing the child’s very soul, unknowingly exposed him or her to a new and transformational site of experience.

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<sup>808</sup> King, *Jumeau*, 40.

<sup>809</sup> Haughton, “Introduction”, li.

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, xliii.

<sup>811</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *Inside Picture Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 16.

The adult has unwittingly facilitated his or her own usurpation, releasing the child into a field of experimentation previously untrammelled, in which he or she will find the means to an autonomy never before grasped.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Breaking the Mould: Shadowy Symbolism and Silhouetted Sovereignty*

“... shadows [...] show us a world more real than reality itself”  
Jules Lemaître<sup>812</sup>

“‘Real isn’t how you are made,’ said the Skin Horse. ‘It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then become Real.’”  
Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*<sup>813</sup>

The aforementioned burgeoning autonomy of the child in the latter decades of the nineteenth century can be evidenced in part in early feminist discourse and creative output. Being that “for the most part of history, the bourgeois has definitely been a ‘he’”, this was unlikely to experience a dramatic transformation overnight, but tentative steps in society nevertheless initiated ripples in cultural circles.<sup>814</sup> Feminism in France in the late-nineteenth century was generally more muted than that of Britain and America, for example, and chiefly focused on legislative reform, as opposed to suffrage, with campaigners of a principally bourgeois or republican background, such as Léon Richer and Maria Deraismes, working “during the 1880s to make feminism into a respectable political position in France, allying it with, and

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<sup>812</sup> Jules Lemaître quoted in Nancy Forgione, “‘The Shadow Only’: Shadow and Silhouette in the Late Nineteenth-Century Paris”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (1999), 502.

<sup>813</sup> Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit: Or How Toys Become Real* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 8.

<sup>814</sup> Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (New York: Verso Books, 2013), 2.

in some cases subordinating it to, the survival of the fledgling and at first unstable Third Republic.”<sup>815</sup>

Despite the efforts of more radical feminists, such as Hubertine Auclert, who campaigned tirelessly for the vote for women from 1879 onwards, feminism in France was limited and to a certain extent characterised by the popular school of thought, fed in part by the misogynist writings of anarchist politician Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and historian Jules Michelet, declaring that “the role and status of women within the family [was] key to the moral and material regeneration of the French nation [and that] restricting the options and rights of women [was] a means of preserving and strengthening the patriarchal family.”<sup>816</sup>

Nevertheless, inspired by and in reaction to this was the artistic production of figures such as Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) and Mary Cassatt (1844-1926). Creating artwork that was as much Realist as it was Impressionist, these women painters endeavoured to “show life as it was, without inviting sympathy, empathy, or moral instruction.”<sup>817</sup> In contrast to the majority of their male counterparts, Morisot and Cassatt gave agency instead of fallacy to previously null and void subjects, subverting “inauthentic or stereotypical images” of femininity and childhood.<sup>818</sup> Tackling a conventional image in a new way, they composed work in which the

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<sup>815</sup> Norma Broude, “Degas and French Feminism, ca. 1880: ‘The Young Spartans’, the Brothel Monotypes, and the Bathers Revisited”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (1988), 644. Léon Richer, editor of the feminist journal *Le Droit des femmes (Women’s Rights)* from 1869 until 1891, joined forces with activist Maria Deraismes to found the *Société pour l’Amélioration du Sort de la Femme et la Revendication de ses Droits (Society for the Improvement of the Fate of Women and the Demand for their Rights)*, which took charge in the political tactics of the French feminist movement. Legislative reform mainly focused on equal education, reestablishment of divorce law, women’s rights to file paternity suits, abolition of state-supervised prostitution, and rights of married women to control their own property.

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.*, 643.

<sup>817</sup> Tamar Garb, *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>818</sup> Susan Fillin Yeh, “Mary Cassatt’s Images of Women”, *Art Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1976), 359.

“children pictured are human and vital, but never idealised, and what beauty they possess is chiefly the beauty of reality.”<sup>819</sup> Hailed by Griselda Pollock as one of the most radical images of childhood of its period, Cassatt’s 1878 painting *Petite fille dans un fauteuil bleu* (*Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*) (fig. 6.1) exemplifies this shift in depictions of childhood.<sup>820</sup>

The composition features a little girl slumped, neglectful of the deportment expected of her, in a bright blue armchair. Dressed in a white frock embellished with a broad tartan sash that matches her socks, the little girl sits open-legged before the viewer, one arm leisurely laid on the armrest and the other placed behind her drooped head, whose facial expression is one of bored disgruntlement. Suggestive of the maddening unfairness of simultaneously being controlled and ignored by adults, “the flopping immaturity of her body, and her wilful, boyish pout” capture a sense of huffing and puffing, a brewing or thrown tantrum by a child who has flung herself down in protest to the imprisonment to which she is subject by the social constraints of the world of grown-ups; for her, “the enactment of class and gender seems a burden that she bears reluctantly.”<sup>821</sup>

Interpretations of this painting are plentiful, such is its renown in the realms of not only early feminist artwork and historical markers of cultural production, but also in modern and changing concepts and conceptions of childhood and children.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>819</sup> “[Illustration]: Mother and Children – Mary Cassatt”, *Art and Progress*, Vol.1, No. 10 (1910), 1.

<sup>820</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 2129.

<sup>821</sup> Greg M. Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls: on the commodification of girlhood in Impressionist painting” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 110-111.

<sup>822</sup> Prominent scholarship on the painting includes commentaries from the following: Judith A. Barter (ed.), *Mary Cassatt, Modern Woman* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998); John E. Bullard, *Mary Cassatt: Oils and Pastels* (New York: Watson-Guipill Publications, 1972); Harriet Chessman, “Mary Cassatt and the Maternal Body” in *American Iconology*, ed. David C. Miller (London: New Haven,

Whilst it is known that Edgar Degas influenced this artwork (he and Cassatt were good friends), evident in its asymmetrical composition and cropped pictorial space akin to the Japanese prints to which he had introduced Cassatt, Pollock chose instead to focus upon “the low perspectival construction in this picture to introduce her argument that Cassatt and Morisot resisted the sexual commodification embedded in the male bourgeois gaze by creating alternate forms of feminine identity within the spaces of painting and viewing.”<sup>823</sup> Although some readings of the portrayal of a sulky, arguably naughty little girl, with parted legs almost at the viewer’s eye level, might offer suggestions of a sort of masculinist hypersexualisation of a prepubescent child typical of patriarchal concepts, art writer Harriet Chessman, inspired by Pollock’s concept of “spaces of femininity”, argued instead that Cassatt’s use of the child’s body functions as a way of actually encoding and concealing female sexuality.<sup>824 825</sup>

Whilst Cassatt herself declared that “women should be ‘someone’, not ‘something’,” this can be equally applied to the position and role of the child.<sup>826</sup> In contrast to the fashion for tailoring the child from the outside inwards, allowing the careful indentations of the delicately moulded shell to press into the soulless vacuity of its interior, Cassatt’s blue armchair girl bears an exterior shaped by the multiformity of within. She is from the inside outwards an embodiment of her personhood, not her mould, and thus in possession of the depth of which her toy-

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1993); Germaine Greer, “Storm in the teacups”, *The Guardian*, 22 November 2013; and Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

<sup>823</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 65.

<sup>824</sup> Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” in Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, 50-90.

<sup>825</sup> Harriet Chessman, “Mary Cassatt and the Maternal Body” in *American Iconology*, ed. Miller, David C. (London: New Haven, 1993), 239-58.

<sup>826</sup> Mary Cassatt quoted in Frederick A. Sweet, *Miss Mary Cassatt: Impressionist from Pennsylvania* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 136.

child counterparts are bereft: “Cassatt was of course one of the few artists ever to invest children with the full range and depth of human character [that] one can almost see the struggles of ego formation going on inside [the little girl], her id squirming against the constraints of bourgeois visual codes”, and her elusive sideways glance indicative of her scepticism as she warps the inauthenticity of an exterior increasingly impressed with that which lies beneath it.<sup>827</sup>

However, in order to elevate the position of the child most effectively, not only did efforts need to move beyond just those concerned with debunking longstanding gender myths, but crucially, they needed to come from the children themselves. Whilst Cassatt and Morisot sought to remove the veil of distortion draped over concepts and depictions of women and children, it remains imbued with feminist agency, and even without such a gendered focus, their images are nevertheless those of adult concoction.

Accordingly, following this consideration of depictions of children in amongst ripples of French feminism in nineteenth-century art, this chapter now turns its attention to the burgeoning autonomy of the child, and acknowledgment of the wisdom thereof, firstly through the insightful and creative possibilities in the mysterious ‘shadowland’ of play unencumbered by adult dogmatism. This is then developed by looking to the changing role and significance of the shadow in art, most specifically Symbolism, as representative of not only truth and essence of self, but also the floating ephemerality of childhood and life in general as became considerably more apparent within the rapid onset of modernity. Drawing upon the examples of Loïe Fuller (1862-1928) and related artworks, and J.M. Barrie’s (1860-

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<sup>827</sup> Thomas, “Impressionist Dolls”, 110.

1937) *Peter Pan*, the chapter's case studies centre on artistic and literary representations of the notion of the shadow child as the embodiment of both the duality and ephemerality of modern life, before considering how these concepts and concerns gave rise to an interest in what the condition of childhood might have to offer the modern man, both creatively and philosophically.

Whilst André Gide commented upon the “fascination of games and play [and] their deep relationship with art”, alluding to, perhaps, “Baudelaire’s account of the initiation [of a child] to art through a toy”, this only reaches gravitas when the child is able effect this relationship and experience on his own terms and under his own steam.<sup>828 829</sup> In other words, whilst toys often served as a means by which adults could exert further control and influence over children, as the previous chapter explored, this could be subverted on many levels through the rejection of mainstream toys and their functions in favour of a more imaginative and freer approach to play.

One such example was the rising popularity of shadow play and shadow theatre. Shadow puppet shows, dating back to ninth-century China and Indonesia, had reached France by 1767, when they were brought back from the Orient by French missionaries, giving them their original name in French of *ombres chinoises*, meaning ‘Chinese shadows’. Whilst the first Chinese shadow theatre opened in Paris in 1775, the spectacle was popularised on a grander scale in France by puppeteer François Dominique Séraphin, who gave performances in Paris in 1776 and Versailles in 1781. The shadow theatre was increasingly the favourite of adult

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<sup>828</sup> René Galand, “Baudelaire’s Psychology of Play”, *The French Review*, Vol. 44 (1971), 12.

<sup>829</sup> Marilyn R. Brown, “Introduction: Baudelaire between Rousseau and Freud, in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 8.



audiences in the following century, with spectacles led notably by artist Henri Rivière (1864-1951), who created a form of shadow theatre at the famous Montmartre cabaret bar *Le Chat Noir*. Collaborating with various artists and writers, developing both aesthetic and technical innovations, Rivière produced some forty-three shadow plays before the café's closure in 1897 and helped to influence the art and production of future theatricals, especially phantasmagoria, for years to come.<sup>830</sup>

French entertainer Félicien Trewéy (1848-1920) rode on Rivière's coattails, taking the reins at the turn of the twentieth century by performing shadowgraphic demonstrations as part of his popular magic shows (fig. 6.2), producing silhouettes of famous (usually political) figures (fig. 6.3) which appealed to the favour for satire amongst adult audiences. Shadowgraphy, or *ombremanie*, as it was known in France, worked best with the concentrated brightness of candlelight, and so the prevalence of electric light towards the end of the nineteenth century caused the art form's popularity on a public scale to dwindle dramatically in favour of new favourites such as cinema.

However, no such waning of favour occurred in the home. Not only did candles and other similar forms of lamplight remain commonplace in households for years to come, but miniaturised, simplified domestic versions of the shadowgraphic spectacle were easily rendered with aids such as cardboard cut-out versions of Séraphin's shows made available for purchase to compliment children's bedroom makeshift theatres. Similarly, Trewéy published an illustrated book of instruction in 1920 entitled *The Art of Shadowgraphy: How It Is Done*, inspired by British sculptor Henry Bursill's similar publication from over sixty years earlier in which readers

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<sup>830</sup> Phillip Dennis Cate and Mary Shaw, eds., *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor and the Avant-Garde, 1875-1905*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 55-58.

could follow a selection of illustrations on the formation of hand shadows (figs. 6.4-6.6).<sup>831</sup>

More significant still is the general ease by which any child could partake in such a game, a simple pleasure in which surely everyone to this day can remember indulging as a child, marvelling and giggling by lamplight at the apparent profundity of a creation so ingeniously yet basically rendered. Unlike gendered toys of adult design, perfect, embellished bisque dolls for girls and neat, military-inspired toy soldiers or warships for boys, shadow puppets are by and for everyone, unlimited by gender and class, and other oppressive constraints. Moreover, their innate malleability affords a greater freedom of both interpretation and creation; uninhibited by the rigidity of form and function instilled within the modern, manufactured toy, shadow puppets and shadow play bestow seemingly unlimited options upon the child, allowing him or her to create shapes and characters of their own invention, inflating them with personalities and stories contrived of their own unrestrained imagination.

This points to the propensity amongst children in general to operate in far freer a sphere of imagination, experience, and cognisance, compared with that of adults. Far from the black and white concept of the world held by adults, both that of play and in general, the child's understanding falls in amongst the shadowy grey in between, where previously distinct and demarcated notions begin to morph and blend, creating an obscure melange resistant to the intransigence of adult ideals, and

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<sup>831</sup> Barbara Stafford and Frances Terpak. *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002), 77. Henry Bursill used his skills as a Royal Academy trained sculptor to visualise easy hand shapes to produce effective shadow puppetry as demonstrated in his 1859 book *Hand Shadows to be Thrown upon the Wall*.

akin to both the undulating changeability and wispy effervescence of the elusive shadow we find lurking in and amongst the polar planes of black and white.

One of the most shadowy regions is of course that which harbours play. It is a place which straddles boundaries, not just between fantasy and reality, imagination and experience, but also between technology and nature. For many scholars of child psychology, play, as “a basic form of living”, occupies a significant position in the developing psyche of the child.<sup>832</sup> Acknowledging the cathartic qualities of such a practice, during which anxieties and misapprehensions are resolved, Melanie Klein details how “early analysis has shown that in play the child not only overcomes painful reality, but is assisted in mastering its instinctual fears and internal dangers by projecting them into the outer world, [for] the child turns the experiences it has passively endured into an active performance and changes pain into pleasure by giving its originally painful experiences a happy ending.”<sup>833</sup>

Consequently, it is unsurprising that “play and experiment can be intimately connected”, for the former becomes a practice in the latter as a child develops an understanding of the surrounding world, on both smaller and more expansive scales.<sup>834</sup> As referred to in the previous chapter, play offers the child the opportunity to experience relationships and occurrences akin to those encountered in the adult world, and by presenting this within the miniature realm of play, in the shrunken yet seemingly whole environment of the bedroom or nursery, the child is able to “gain a semblance of mastery over his world [...] a world totally subjected to his will,

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<sup>832</sup> D.W. Winnicott quoted in Marina Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest”, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2009), 14.

<sup>833</sup> Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1960), 246.

<sup>834</sup> Joseph Wachelder, “Toys as Mediators”, *Icon*, Vol. 13 (2007), 165.

[becoming] the God of the Cosmos.”<sup>835</sup> In line with the way in which “children use toys to recreate situations from the past, to relive the present within more controllable boundaries and to anticipate the future”, academics have increasingly viewed toys in all forms as not only cultural markers or “an index to the character of a nation [but] an outgrowth of childhoods past, [...] a means of monitoring and evaluating the child’s mental worlds.”<sup>836</sup>

This crossover between fantasy and reality, imagination and experience, as facilitated by play, is joined by the apparent juxtaposition of the very natural, timeless, and innate practice of play with the modern artificiality of technological invention. Whilst the connection between invention and toys, and therefore children, is palpable and well-traversed, with German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz declaring that “les hommes n’ont jamais montré tan de sagacité que dans l’invention des jeux”, children themselves have contributed considerably to the transpiration of other technological inventions and developments.<sup>837</sup> The tendency within the child to experiment, to *toy* with that beyond the adult-prescribed novelty, and to allow this experience to become imbued with a whimsical freedom which evades the procedural empiricism of adults, exposed them to the crucial gems whose elusive residence in the ‘shadowlands’ rendered them invisible to those unable or unwilling to look beyond monochrome polarity. An example of evidence of “l’influence des expériences enfantines sur les grandes découvertes de l’homme” can be found in the story of optician Jacob Metius, whose young son’s habitual playing with all sorts of

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<sup>835</sup> Galand, “Baudelaire’s Psychology”, 13-14.

<sup>836</sup> Beatrice E. Lewis, “Antique Toys: Vestiges of Childhoods Past”, *Children’s Environments Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1984), 3-6.

<sup>837</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz quoted in Edouard Fournier. *Histoire des Jouets et des Jeux d’Enfants* (Paris : E. Dentu, 1889), 89. Translation: “men have never shown as much wisdom as when they invented games”.

different types of glass, observing the ways in which one's view was warped and distorted by the various thicknesses and shapes, led to the eventual discovery of the telescope in 1608, a tool which has since not only expanded the astronomer's field immeasurably, but also opened up the world of space to the masses.<sup>838</sup>

This therefore invites exploration when we consider how a discarded piece of bric-a-brac or some bauble drawn from the dark and dusty confines of the toy box is saturated and transformed by the imagination and investment of the child, whose proficiency within what Erik Erikson calls "the microsphere, [...] the small world of manageable toys" becomes all the more effective with the onset of a powerful emotional and psychological input from the child.<sup>839</sup> Whilst adults "nevertheless displace their own childishness onto their children, manufacturing toys as much to serve their own needs as those of their offspring", as the previous chapter discovered, this became increasingly overturned by the propensity of the child to seek alternatives, not only endeavouring to manipulate adult-designed toys beyond their intended purposes, but producing their own playtime creations, composed of material or imagination, or some magical combination thereof.<sup>840</sup>

And so again we return to this shadowy notion of the in-between which characterises children and their environment, and which contrasts the stark polarity of the black and white stipulations of the adult world. Comparable symbolically and conceptually to "l'émancipation de la poupée, trop longtemps garrottée dans ses membres ignobles", the static and rigid doll by which play and indeed the child was characterised was disintegrating, its black and white components crumbling into a

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<sup>838</sup> Fournier. *Histoire des Jouets*, 98-101. Translation: "the influence of childhood experiences on the great discoveries of man".

<sup>839</sup> E.H. Erikson, *Childhood And Society* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 1995), 198.

<sup>840</sup> David Hopkins, *Childish Things* (Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2010), 12.

grey dust from which the fluid, free-moving shadow, puppet and otherwise, was emerging in fantastical arabesques.<sup>841</sup> Furthermore, and not dissimilar to the effects of Marcel Proust's magic lantern as discussed in Chapter Four, the free sinuosity of the shadow, emblematic of the child's liberal approach to toys and play, exposes a whole new world of sensory and material experience, for as the child "challenges norms [...] the kaleidoscope patterns all around him start to shift."<sup>842</sup>

The mysteriousness by which this is all characterised is symptomatic of and contributory towards the equivocality, freedom, and secretiveness at the heart of the child's unique concept of and attitude towards toys and play, for "this rather dark apprehension of the origins of toys and of their fundamental ambiguity [means] toys elude any precise positioning in terms of our inner and outer worlds."<sup>843</sup> The fluidity by which the child's understanding of toys is characterised is matched by that of the nature of his or her world of play. Private and magical, an unyielding flux between inner and outer worlds, a complex amalgamation of experience, perception, and imagination, the world of play for the child is akin to the dark, cellular privacy of the toy chest, a shadowy enclave in which both joy and uncertainty reside, but crucially, an environment in which the child possesses the freedom, under the metaphorical veil of shadows, to operate on his or her own terms. It is unsurprising that children favoured toys, or peculiar and unofficial manifestations thereof, of a basic and malleable nature, than those of adult design. Whilst it is often true that "in a toy store, a child can find a miniature of life far more colourful, cleaner and shinier than

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<sup>841</sup> Fournier. *Histoire des Jouets*, 4. Translation: "the emancipation of the doll, too long restricted by horrible limbs".

<sup>842</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood: Portraits in Fiction, Film, and Drama* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011), 49.

<sup>843</sup> Hopkins, *Childish Things*, 11.

real life”, such a vivid glow is potentially far more pronounced still when it is born of the limitless folds of imagination.<sup>844</sup>

Whilst Chapter Four addressed the powerful capacity of “imagination [to] reshape experience into beautiful or terrifying memories, and infuse them with the passage of time”, its instrumentality in the here-and-now proves just as significant, and especially in the realm of play, during which “the child soon begins to create a personal inner world in which magic holds sway [and] which must be taken seriously.”<sup>845</sup> <sup>846</sup> In this secret society of “imaginary conversations and elaborate scenarios”, there is unsurprisingly no place for the rigid superficiality of the modern, mechanical toy.<sup>847</sup> Not only does the mechanical toy, unlike that fuelled by imagination, rely upon “the fortitude of solid form” by which to render itself ‘truth’, but by its very nature, it fails to return the feeling advanced by the child.<sup>848</sup> In contrast to the apparent ‘living’ personality of the toy or plaything imagined or invested in by the child, the mechanical or modern toy fails to match its physical tangibility with an emotional or spiritual equivalent, for it “threatens an infinite pleasure: it does not tire or feel, it simply works or doesn’t work.”<sup>849</sup>

Such frustration is exacerbated by the arrogance and ignorance of the adult in the creation of such soulless toys, and is in turn parodied in sections of Margery William’s famous children’s book *The Velveteen Rabbit* (1922), which, suggestive of the despondence of the child when faced with the dogmatism of the adult,

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<sup>844</sup> Galand, “Baudelaire’s Psychology”, 14.

<sup>845</sup> Beryl Schlossman, “Chapter Twelve”, in *Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. Rosemary Lloyd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184.

<sup>846</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* (London: Penguin, 2000), 129.

<sup>847</sup> Warner, “Old Toy Chest”, 3.

<sup>848</sup> B. Brown, “Reification, reanimation and the American uncanny”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 32 (2006), 185.

<sup>849</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 57.

describes how “the mechanical toys were very superior, and looked down upon everyone else; they were full of modern ideas, and pretended they were real [and] he [the Rabbit] understood that sawdust was quite out-of-date and should never be mentioned in modern circles.”<sup>850</sup>

Like the child who becomes the giant at play, the master of his microsphere of toys, the world in miniature, Williams harnesses the *mise en abîme* of the toy world by mirroring the perceived inadequacies of the poor, basic, or antiquated in the eyes of the self-aggrandizing, modern bourgeoisie through the relationships between the traditional, old, and well-loved toys, and the brand new technological ones. Significantly, the moral of the story lies in the rejection of such modern fallacy, for as the Skin Horse elucidates to the Velveteen Rabbit, it is only the love and affection of a child that reveals the pathway to becoming ‘Real’. Indeed, for whilst “the most magnificent toys cannot compete with life itself”, this is in turn dwarfed by the extraordinary capacity of the child to effectively create and instil life of its own accord and merely by virtue of his or her powerful imagination; in other words, “when make-believe fails, the vitality of toys vanishes.”<sup>851 852</sup>

In tandem with investing simple, often seemingly tired toys, with affection and imagination, children also excel in their ability to, as Charles Baudelaire marvelled, “play without playthings.”<sup>853</sup> Marina Warner has discussed at length the child’s capacity to collate trinkets and inanimate knickknacks to enliven with imagination to form landscapes and stories of technicolour fantasy, for “in playing, mental objects become real: the pebbles and grass make a delicious meal, especially

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<sup>850</sup> Williams, *Velveteen Rabbit*, 6-7.

<sup>851</sup> Galand, “Baudelaire’s Psychology”, 17.

<sup>852</sup> Warner, “Old Toy Chest”, 4.

<sup>853</sup> Charles Baudelaire quoted in Warner, “Old Toy Chest”, 4.



served on a plate that's a leaf, [...] a cotton reel can be a tank or a house, [...] the clothes peg a wounded soldier or Mummy, a series of bottles a train.”<sup>854</sup> Perhaps even more significant is the intimacy which characterises the relationships that children forge with toys or indeed apparently random objects: “the most useful doll I ever saw was a large cucumber in the hands of a little Amazonian-Indian girl; she nursed it and washed it and rocked it to sleep in a hammock, and talked to it all day long – there was no part in life which the cucumber did not play.”<sup>855</sup>

Not only does this buttress the notion that a “primitive plaything can turn into a thing of beauty”, with the semantic connotations of colonial misperceptions and ignorance here reminiscent of adult obtuseness when faced with the wisdom of the child, but it points to the significance of D.W. Winnicott’s concept of the transitional object.<sup>856</sup> In simple terms, the transitional object becomes apparent during the transitional experience of the child, during which he or she begins to learn to distinguish between ‘me’ from ‘not-me’, and thus realises that the previous mother-child whole is actually composed to two separate entities. Accordingly, the child’s illusion of subjective omnipotence, the belief that its desires ultimately create satisfaction, is gradually replaced with objective reality, whereby the child independently seeks objects of desire. With this comes the feeling of loss upon the realisation that the mother is separate, and thus the child dependent upon an externality that cannot always be around. This ultimately gives rise to the transitional object, which serves as the first ‘not me’ possession of the child’s creation to help ease the transition from attachment to coexistence with the mother,

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<sup>854</sup> Warner, “Old Toy Chest”, 9.

<sup>855</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1890, EBook edition, <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/Principles>.

<sup>856</sup> Galand, “Baudelaire’s Psychology”, 15.

and often therefore, as a source of pacification during bouts of anxiety and loneliness, thereby sometimes even becoming “more important than the mother, an almost inseparable part of the infant.”<sup>857</sup>

Add to this the affection and depth of imagination invested into toys and play by children, and it is easy to anticipate how such an object or plaything becomes a most special friend, a seemingly living entity within this secret and magical world, where “sous les yeux de ces enfants, dont les fraîches imaginations reflètent avec une facilité merveilleuse les objets les plus fugitives et qui s’attachent à leurs premiers jouets, avec une passion acharnée, au point de les préférer dans leur état de ruine et d’invalidité, à de nouveaux cadeaux dans leur fraîcheur.”<sup>858</sup> Bernd Brunner cites the baby-like appearance of teddy bears as a significant draw in appeal for the enamoured adult buyer, detailing that “the generalised representation of a diminutive, toothless bear with a snub nose, fat cheeks [...] and a cuddly body [...] possess all the traits that awaken sympathy in humans and motivate them to buy.”<sup>859</sup> But it is reasonable also to propose that this physical similarity enhances the strong sense of kinship between a child and his or her bear; this comforting shape of squidgy softness becomes far more than its fabric and stuffing might first suggest.

This sense of underestimation of the toy or plaything, especially when subject to the emotional and imaginative investment of the child, is reflective of the much larger issues of the widespread misplaced scepticism which characterises adult understandings of children and the reality of their heightened perception, ingenuity,

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<sup>857</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005), 9.

<sup>858</sup> Fournier. *Histoire des Jouets*, 4. Translation: “in the eyes of these children, whose fresh imagination reflects with marvellous ease upon the most fleeting objects, and who attach themselves to their first toys with a fierce passion, to the point at which they prefer them in their ruined or broken state, to new toys in all their freshness.”

<sup>859</sup> Bernd Brunner, *Bears: A Brief History*, trans. Lori Lantz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 43.

and vision. Winnicott has detailed how it is damaging on an emotional and developmental level for adults to quash such mental meanderings: “You must expect a child to become possessed by all kinds of real and imaginary people, and by animals and things, and sometimes these imaginary people and animals will come outside, so that you will have to pretend you see them too, unless you want to cause great confusion through requiring your child to be grown-up while still a child.”<sup>860</sup> Furthermore, in “paraphrasing Freud, we have called play the royal road to the understanding of the infantile ego’s efforts at synthesis”, and so it is just as important to acknowledge the significance of the role undertaken by the child, often facilitated through play practice, in opening the collective mind to less rigid ways of thinking.<sup>861</sup>

Contrary to the blinkered dogmatism and selfishness typical of the adult-centricity of society, emblemised by the precise and limiting monochrome delineations, the solid and unflinching black and white frontiers of their scope, the capacity and propensity of the child to engage with a far broader spectrum of notions, to reject longstanding obstinacy, can be understood in metaphorical terms as a perusing wander into the shadowy stretch of no-man’s-land. It is in many ways a wilderness, a misty expanse of undulating landscape comprising fluctuating shapes and tones, like layer upon layer of film-like shadow, at once frightening, bemusing, and enlightening. This physical rendering of a betwixt and between ‘shadowland’ lurking in and amongst, beyond and beside the linear borders of adulthood, is in turn symbolic of the emotional and psychological fusion innate within the child.

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<sup>860</sup> Winnicott, *The Child*, 130.

<sup>861</sup> Erikson, *Childhood And Society*, 188.

The sense of mystery by which this is characterised is as much testament to the hazy darkness of a previously denied or belittled subject, relegated to beneath an obscuring sheath of shadow, as it is demonstrative of deep insightfulness of the child. Whilst it has been established that “children are much more fluid than adults in what they consider to be toys”, this is poignantly indicative of the flux-like cursiveness of their outlook in general, and thus their innate sense of mindfulness and its contribution to a shift at the turn of the twentieth century towards exploratory free-thinking and a more independent yet cohesive outlook on relationships and experience.<sup>862</sup>

Accordingly, the shadow and all that it represented began to gain autonomy, not least in the artistic world, where, like the child, it had for so long seemed supplementary and shaded out, but was now emerging as a powerful symbol of a deeper truth and intrinsic sense of soul previously overlooked. “*Mais où est l’âme?*” beseeches the child, vicariously through Baudelaire, as the inertia of the modern toy and indeed modern life is thoroughly lamented, before the insightfulness of the child affords the emergence in veils and waves of the very symbol of this truth and soul of being: the shadow.<sup>863</sup>

The changing role and view of the shadow as a symbolic and powerful entity at this time, in this way metaphorical of the burgeoning emergence of childhood autonomy, can be charted by looking to its new position in art. Whilst solid black silhouettes had become stylistically popular in decorative art and poster design, as well as in miniature profile portraits both in Europe and Asia, their aesthetic appeal

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<sup>862</sup> Christopher P. Barton and Kyle Somerville, “Play Things: Children’s Radicalised Mechanical Banks and Toys, 1880-1930”, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2012), 52.

<sup>863</sup> Baudelaire, “Morale du joujou”. Translation: “But *where is the soul?*”

began to extend much further, especially when combined with their new symbolic autonomy. Far from functioning, as it traditionally did, as what Paul Gauguin termed a supplementary sort of “trompe d’oeuil”, the shadow and silhouette was, by the late-nineteenth century in France especially, establishing itself as a powerful and metaphorical artistic entity in its own right.<sup>864</sup> Although varying in its specifics, much of the sense of agency now afforded to shadows and silhouettes was founded upon a somewhat mythological belief that shadows are “the souls, life essence, or strength of the individual” which was receiving renewed support from avant-garde groups.<sup>865</sup>

It was arguably the Symbolist movement that spearheaded this concept most enthusiastically, emphasising the “equation of shadow with the inner self rather than the external descriptive appearance of an individual [which] lent itself to the developing Mallarméan ambition of many late nineteenth-century artists ‘to suggest’ rather than to describe their subjects.”<sup>866</sup> Symbolist artists, and those many other members of the avant-garde of nineteenth-century France for whom they provided copious inspiration, considered the shadow and silhouette in their minimal and unmodulated forms as pictorial elements more powerful than their embellished counterparts, for by dispensing with unnecessary detail, one is able to more effectively capture and appreciate “the intrinsic nature of things [and] the artist’s apprehension of the internal”.<sup>867</sup> French writer Édouard Dujardin cited the silhouette

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<sup>864</sup> Paul Gauguin in a letter to Émile Bernard in 1888, quoted in Forgione, ““The Shadow Only””, 490. Translates from French to mean “trick of the eye”.

<sup>865</sup> Maria Leach, ed., *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1950): 1000.

<sup>866</sup> Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l’évolution littéraire* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1913), 55-65. Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) was a French poet and critic, whose work as a leading member of Symbolist movement inspired several artistic and literary movements of the early twentieth century.

<sup>867</sup> Forgione, ““Shadow Only””, 492-3.

for the Symbolists as helping to “give the sensation of things”, emphasising the new preference for feeling over the physical, thereby not only supporting the notion that “the valorisation of shadow implied a new aim – to impart the truth behind appearances [but also that] the thematisation of shadow in late-nineteenth century French art participated in a larger tendency to explore the less material aspects of being”, and thus dispense with the veneer-deep superficiality of adults and against which the child’s mind naturally fought.<sup>868 869</sup>

Accordingly, the shadow and silhouette began to be recognised as an entirely separate entity to the subject to which it was previously considered as belonging, offering instead far more in-depth and emotional a message than outward aesthetics could hope to. By relinquishing the fallacy of external artifice, the shadow represented the most essential substance of deeper truth. The new, individual significance of the shadow, silhouette, and related forms, proved of some weight amongst key thinkers of this period as much as significant artistic figures. Prominent amongst these is Henri Bergson (1859-1941), who, reflective of the aforementioned symbolic image of the many overlapping layers of shadow, posited that “between the polarities of action and dream there are many planes, thousands of planes, in the human mind, through which the intellect can range”, referring to the independent substance yet also interrelating nature of the shadow, as well as its links to the concept of *durée* and inner reality.<sup>870</sup>

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<sup>868</sup> Édouard Dujardin, “Aux XX et aux Indépendants: Le cloisonisme”, *La Revue Indépendante* (1888): 489. Translation by Nancy Forgione.

<sup>869</sup> Forgione, ““Shadow Only””, 493.

<sup>870</sup> Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory: Childhood Recollection and Its Objects in Literary Modernism* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2011), 26. In simple terms, Bergson’s theory of *durée* (‘duration’) states that time as a form of consciousness eludes mathematical and scientific measurements as it is mobile and incomplete. Time is ineffable and can only ever be partially grasped and represented by intuition of the imagination and images thereof; a moment may

In order to gauge a comprehensive understanding of the stylistic and symbolic role of the silhouette and shadow in French art at this time, it is pertinent to study the artworks of avant-garde figures such as Félix Vallotton (1865-1925), Maurice Denis (1870-1943), Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), and Adolphe Willette (1857-1926), exploring their effective and varied employment of a range of images and techniques relating to the child, the shadow, and the complex relationship thereof. Vallotton's 1899 painting *Le Ballon (The Ball)* (fig. 6.7) depicts a sort of aerial view of a middle-class park scene roughly comprising two halves: the green foliage of the background featuring two adults in the distance, and a little girl running about on the dirt or gravel of the foreground, playing with her bright red ball.

This image of the child at play can be understood on face value as a rare example of a child freely being a child; uninhibited, she is racing about in the fresh air, at liberty to play with a relatively rudimentary toy of her choosing. A more symbolic understanding can be gleaned from this work, however. Not only does the diagonal splitting of the frame and perspectival distortion point to the stylistic features of the Japanese woodblock prints that would prove so influential to Symbolist artworks, but the curving slant to which the scene is subject suggests something of an ongoing movement or shift akin to that innate to the constantly undulating world of the child at play. Furthermore, the work is dominated by shadow, both that which spreads across the ground as if to playfully chase the little

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last longer for one person than for another, and longer than its scientific description may attempt to suggest. The relationship of the shadow to this theory is discussed by Bergson in his 1889 work *Essai sur le données immédiates de la conscience (Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness)*.

girl, and the billowing shapes of the bushes and trees which seem to tumble like clouds of smoke and shadow on top of the landscape.

In turn, Vallotton's *La Lingère, Chambre Bleue* (*The Laundress, Blue Room*) (1900) (fig. 6.8) situates the three elements of children, play, and the shadow in an interior setting. In a blue-coloured bedroom are seated two laundresses busy at work, the foremost of which has become little more than a silhouette in profile as she works in the dim light mending a section of sheet. The fabric of this enormous expanse of sheet concertinas from her lap onto the floor, spreading in its crumpled and billowed form across the majority of the room where two children find themselves huddled in its folds. Their little den amongst the cavernous, shadowy creases of this "tabernacle of old sheets", reminiscent of that haven in which Proust's seclusion and creativity resided and churned, is exactly the seemingly ordinary environment in which the imagination of the child thrives during play, their unrestrained minds swirling and undulating like the shadows which characterise their dusky and secretive setting.<sup>871</sup>

It is perhaps the case that more pervasive amongst these artists and their interest in the image of the child, the shadow, and related metaphors, was a propensity to adopt, in line with their fancy for suggestion, a less literal and more representative rendering of this particular relationship and symbol. This can be understood most effectively through an analysis of the ways in which their works were influenced by various aspects of Japanese art pertaining to the *ukiyo-e* genre. Whilst the influx of *japonisme* and *japonaiserie* was unyielding in the latter decades of the French nineteenth century, the impact of *ukiyo-e* aesthetics and symbolism

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<sup>871</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *The Brightening Glance: Imagination and Childhood* (New York: Random House, 2007), 151.



proved especially significant for leading artists of the avant-garde.<sup>872</sup> Whilst individual styles and subjects of *ukiyo-e* could vary dramatically, the steadfast feature that these images depicted was of an ephemerality and somewhat intangible quality of time, space and existence that the genre name suggested.<sup>873</sup>

Symbolist artist and member of radical art group *Les Nabis*, Maurice Denis embraced the new concept of relinquishing perspective and colour modulation as it was traditionally employed in favour of more unusual methods.<sup>874</sup> His 1892 work *Procession sous les Arbres* (*Procession under the Trees*) (fig. 6.9) exemplifies this, for not only do the five figures and surrounding trees appear largely as silhouettes, filled in almost one block colour and bereft of detail, but their plainness makes way for the wonderfully decorative arabesques of the shadows. Being that the trees to whom we assume the shadows belong are scarcely visible, it is as though the “cast shadows produce the forms”, for this tangle of swirling French navy busies its way quite independently across the ground, wilfully encroaching on the blank skirts of the figures.<sup>875</sup>

The influence of Japanese art is evident here not only in the subject matter, but in the employment of block colour and pictorial arrangement. For example, Torii Kyonaga's (1752-1815) woodblock print of 1784 entitled *The Third Month* (fig. 6.10) presents a composition of gathered figures in draped, largely plain clothing under the cover of trees which is strikingly similar to that of Denis', especially

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<sup>872</sup> The term *japonisme* ('Japanism' in English) refers to the stylistic features associated with Japanese art, for example, flattened pictorial space and a lack of normal proportions. The term *japonaiserie* ('Japanesery' in English) refers to the inclusion in Western art and home decoration of paraphernalia associated with Japanese culture, for example fans, parasols, lanterns and silk screens.

<sup>873</sup> *Ukiyo-e* translates to English to mean 'pictures of the floating world'.

<sup>874</sup> Les Nabis, derived from the Hebrew and Arabic word 'Nabi', meaning 'prophet', was a group of rebellious, post-Impressionist student artists who, having studied at the Académie Jullian in the late 1880s, to revitalise fine and graphic arts in France. Their work was influenced by the theories of Paul Gauguin and characterised by distortion, and expressive use of colour and pattern.

<sup>875</sup> Forgione, ““Shadow Only””, 490.

considering the dark tree trunk on the far right which cuts both artworks from the base to the top of the frame, distorting the picture space and thus providing for a scene which is naturally awkward and does not correspond to the careful spatial arrangements of traditional Western art.

Painter and printmaker, Pierre Bonnard, also a founding member of *Les Nabis*, is famous for his employment of the simple silhouette, which infiltrated much of his work, and was often combined with his interest in *ukiyo-e*. His 1896 lithograph *La Petite Blanchisseuse (The Little Laundry Girl)* (fig. 6.11) depicts the black, silhouetted form of a little girl making her way along a street carrying a basket full of laundry and an umbrella. From the unmodulated surroundings to the peculiar stooping angle of the little girl's position on the road, Bonnard has embraced not only the warped spatial awareness of Japanese art, but also the *ukiyo-e* style of presenting ambiguous, anonymous people carrying out everyday activities, that is to say, the world simply floating by.

Utagawa Hiroshige's (1797-1858) woodblock print *Night Snow at Kambara* (fig. 6.12), the sixteenth in his series entitled *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido* completed between 1833 and 1834 (in itself an exemplary collection dedicated to the study of everyday life at different moments), offers a composition akin to Bonnard's. From the expansive white and grey in both artworks and the spattering of snow in Hiroshige's and perhaps cobbles or debris in Bonnard's, to the weary diagonal progress of the figures and the eerie quietude implied by the emptiness of the frame, these artworks offer shadowy people, for their presence is at once standout, either by splashes of colour or perfect blackness, as well as momentary, captured whilst passing by. The depiction in this French avant-garde art of the

transitory moment of the passing, transcendent person is perhaps reflective of the burgeoning awareness amongst creative individuals of the transience of life, of youth, and thus of one's childhood years, the shadow child floating away with the wind.

A common feature of Japanese art of this style and period is the apparent rootlessness of its subjects, a notion which in itself points to the image of both the newfound freedom and autonomy associated with the child, as well as the ephemerality of childhood as a precious stage so easily lost sight of and left to drift away. Chōshun Miyagawa's (1683-1753) *Ryukyuan Dancer and Musicians* (c.1718) (fig. 6.13) depicts a total of eight, brightly-dressed figures against an unmodulated background in which floor and wall are impossible to discern. Indeterminate in location and dimension, and lacking pictorial depth in their block colour decoration, the figures of this artwork seem little more than silhouettes. Like a well-loved toy or seemingly inconsequential object of the household elevated by the child's imagination, confounded into little more than elusive and ephemeral shadows, these painted figures appear, in fact, to be floating.

What is more, the rootlessness of these colourful silhouettes against the plain background is reminiscent of the sorts of flat shapes suspended on strings or sticks and used in shadow puppetry, weightlessly bobbing along the picture frame as in the miniature theatre of the bedroom or our mind. Vallotton's 1893 work *Le bain au soir d'été* (*The Summer Evening Bath*) (fig. 6.14) bears many stylistic and compositional similarities. Whilst offering a more detailed background and a more perspective-clear composition, *Le bain au soir d'été* is nevertheless an artwork built upon simple shapes and block colour. The frame is dominated by a selection of

female bathers, whose pale skin and bright white shapes of clothing contrast beautifully with the stark black of their hair and removed stockings. Vallotton's work participates in the fashion popular amongst his peers for embracing silhouettes in white and colour as much as in their traditional black. His calmly posed bathers with their largely monochrome plainness and sickled arabesques appear as flat and potentially foldable as the crumpled outfits left scattered on the ground like shed skins.

The distinct sections of silhouetted colour, particularly when coupled by angelic females dressed in white, is reminiscent of "stained glass, [which] with its unmodulated, discrete segments of rich colour bounded by distinct outlines, served as one model for the Synthetist style of painting", emphasising the significance of aesthetics and lack of realism, as opposed to physically accurate representations.<sup>876</sup> Moreover, the bathers are without shadows, and therefore function almost as the shadows themselves, for their forms are like carefully positioned silhouettes, perhaps even cut-outs or flat puppets to be moved about the frame by a child.

The lack of modulation and thus decorative quality of this artwork is such that, although not being symmetrical, it still bears similarities to the repetitive arabesques and shapes of popular wallpaper designs of this period, often pertaining to the Arts and Crafts movement and Art Nouveau. Consider, for example, William Morris' *Pimpernel* from 1876 (fig. 6.15) and Walter Crane's *Swan, Rush and Iris* from 1875 (fig. 6.16), whose use of clean floral or faunal silhouettes, swirling arabesques and unmodulated colour, repeated across the whole design, provide for a

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<sup>876</sup> Forgione, "'Shadow Only'", 498. Coined in 1877, Synthetism was a term used by certain post-Impressionists to distinguish their work from Impressionism. Synthetist works sought to combine the outward appearance of natural forms, the artist's feelings about the subject, and the purity of aesthetics. For Synthetists, an artwork is as much an assemblage of colour and shape as it is of a particular subject or topic.

flat, decorative image suggestive of the shapes, colours and composition of Vallotton's work.<sup>877</sup> What is more, Morris' own affiliation with the Orientalist styles from which these French artists drew their inspiration is multifariously pronounced; from his propagation of traditional artisanal processes for artistic and craft production still practised in far Eastern cultures, to his particular fondness for the highly decorative patterns of Persian rugs, Morris provides a further strand by which Orientalism was woven into Western European art in this period.<sup>878</sup> Although the subject matter varies, this in itself is supportive of the notion that physical entity is secondary to the concept or feeling it embodies, and so with both bathers and flowers, fine art, wallpaper or rugs, the transitory representativeness of the common feature of the silhouette is of most significance: "to balance the fugitive moment and the essential character of a day, [artists] associated the silhouette with the representation of essence."<sup>879</sup>

This essence, now increasingly associated with the character of the child, was not always depicted in such a decoratively complex or stylistically symbolic way; sometimes it was far more clearly representational of metaphor. French painter, illustrator and caricaturist Adolphe Willette's 1884 work *La revue déshabillé de M. Jean d'Arc* (*The Undressed Review of Ms. Joan of Arc*) (fig. 6.17) is one such example. The monochrome poster, advertising a show at Paris' popular Café Concert des Ambassadeurs, depicts in the foreground Joan of Arc in a state of

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<sup>877</sup> The Arts and Crafts movement began in Britain and spread throughout Europe, America and Japan between 1880 and 1930. Often including natural, romantic and folk imagery, the movement was chiefly characterised by vehemently rejecting industrial production in favour of traditional craftsmanship. The work of leading artists and designers like William Morris was likely to have influenced Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau is a total art style which flourished in Europe and America between 1890 and 1910 and was particularly prevalent in the decorative arts. It is typically characterised by abstract natural forms and free-flowing arabesques as a rebellion against the structure and representational style of academic art.

<sup>878</sup> Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 89.

<sup>879</sup> Forgione, "'Shadow Only'", 498.

undress, clad only in a frilly underdress as she removes her stockings, behind which can be seen the black shape of her shadow, which, appearing large and dressed in military attire, represents her true nature. Unlike a traditional form of supplementary perspective, this shadow is the epitome of the new autonomous shadow, taking on appearances and behaviours entirely removed from the subject by which it is supposedly cast, creating a new and independent form more significant than the ostensible subject. Willette's shadow, like that which symbolises the very essence of childhood, is built from, full of, and driven by a personality of its own; bold and mischievous, confident and innovative, yet always maintaining an innate air of mystery.

Such boldness, innovation, and mystery is what lies at the heart of what defines one of the principle figures central to the artistic significance and symbolic power of shadows and silhouettes on a public scale in this period. It was the unique performances of dancer Loïe Fuller and the artwork she inspired which proved influential in the widespread perception and symbolism of the shadow, as well as its complex relationship with the child on physical, psychological, and conceptual levels. This “dynamic, multivalent and contradictory figure in French dance of the Belle Epoque” was born in America, but arrived in Paris in 1892, and despite having no formal dance training, proved immensely popular, though controversial, at the Folies-Bergère, where her famous ‘serpentine dance’ attracted the attention of artists such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Jules Chéret, and Auguste Rodin.<sup>880</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> Naoko Morita, “An American in Paris: Loïe Fuller, Dance and Technology” in *A Belle Époque? Women and Feminism in French Society and Culture 1890-1914*, eds. Diana Holmes and Carrie Tarr, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 113. The ‘serpentine dance’ is a form of dance developed by Fuller which worked by combining unusual stage lighting thrown upon her copious skirts, which she wafted and twirled, creating unusual shapes and colour effects.

Fuller was the unlikely pioneer of modern dance and theatrical lighting techniques, embracing an unusual combination of unorthodox dancing style, amateur and largely untailored costumes of seemingly endless fabric, and a manipulation of “a dazzling array of multi-hued electric lights, which set the material aflame with colour.”<sup>881</sup> From a contemporary perspective, Naoko Morita has summarised Fuller’s influence as having arisen from “her challenge to social and artistic hierarchies [which] resulted in a mix of high and low culture, characteristic of twentieth century art”, which can be corroborated by the array of supporters she attracted from various artistic and literary circles, including Jules Claretie, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Roger Marx, the first of whom in 1907 declared the dancer “a vision of the theatre of the future.”<sup>882 883</sup>

In much the same way that the child often served as both a signifier of personal and collective futurity as well as a symbol of one’s past, history, and roots, Fuller’s art was on the one hand very much a modern one, reliant upon the technological advancement of the day, and on the other, it was founded upon the most basic and natural instincts of body and mind. Fuller’s performances, like many spectacles of the epoch, were largely facilitated by electricity. Akin to the cataclysmic encounter of the child and modernity, the latter years of the nineteenth century saw the world of science and art collide most magnificently in the production of photography and cinema, and did not escape the attention of leading thinkers of the day, who derived deeper, often spiritual, meaning from this interdisciplinary relationship. With particular significance to the role and impact of

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<sup>881</sup> Sally R. Sommer, “Loïe Fuller’s Art of Music and Light”, *Dance Chronicle*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1981), 392.

<sup>882</sup> Morita, “American in Paris”, 116.

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

Loïe Fuller, consider how “Edison’s laboratory is the locus of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s symbolist novel-manifesto *L’Ève future* (1886), in which Edison uses chemistry, chronophotography and [...] ‘the radiant’ state to instil life in a female automaton.”<sup>884</sup>

The implication here of the capacity of science, art and spirituality combining to forge a new form of life from the seemingly inanimate was not only directly linked to Fuller’s embodiment of a sort of ethereal yet living phantom mobilised by spasmodic energy, but also mirrored by the emerging agency and burgeoning acknowledgment of the child as a person in its own right as opposed to some sort of incidental ornament. Fuller embraced her era’s interest in such topics, as well as its development of electrical and cinematic capabilities, even writing to Marie and Pierre Curie to enquire about the luminosity of radium, and ultimately formulating performances that “relied mainly on spotlights and magic lanterns [and] with coloured gelatine circles [...] she had secret ways of tinting the gelatine, to blend and dissolve the colours projected [...]. She also made the slides of plain or frosted glass for her magic lantern projectors herself [...] and made an arrangement of mirrors to create multiple images.”<sup>885</sup>

Fuller’s use of electricity and cinematics was as much symbolic as it was practical. Indeed, “like the plates of a dynamo, Fuller’s spectacle builds charge; it is electrified and electrifying”, for by the turn of the century “the energy and magic of electricity acquired an aesthetic status, representing the instability and fluidity of the

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<sup>884</sup> Christophe Wall-Romana, “Mallarmé’s Cinopoetics: The Poem Uncoiled by the Cinématographe, 1893-98”, *PMLA*, Vol. 1 (2005), 130-31. Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam (1838-1889) published *L’Ève future* (*The Future Eve*) in 1886, which, inclusive of themes as wide-ranging as chemistry, invention, Decadence, mental illness and misogyny, is generally considered a work of Symbolist science fiction.

<sup>885</sup> Morita, “American in Paris”, 120.



world [as well as] the fluid energy of electricity seemed synonymous with the flowing dynamics of Fuller's dance style".<sup>886 887</sup> In her manipulation of an already well-established form of cinematic art, the magic lantern, traditionally associated with horror spectacles, Fuller was able to inspire a sense of ethereality and spirituality connected not only to the world of unknowns and curiosities so prevalent in modern life, but also to the image of the independently moving shadow and silhouette as symbolic of the autonomous yet ephemeral child.

This is augmented further by the typical features and effects of early film and photography, namely the predilection towards unfocused, blurred images, a sense of repetitive layering or 'ghosting' of certain aspects of the picture, and a seemingly spasmodic energy to some filmed movement. Although usually just symptomatic of undeveloped technological techniques, these qualities actually served to enhance a shadowy effect or appearance either in themselves or the scenes or art they captured. Add to this their greyscale tonality at this time, and they become an artwork in their own right, for as Roger Fry discerns, "every solid object is subject to the play of light and shade, and becomes a mosaic of visual patches," an ephemeral manifestation of blended and layered shadows on a plain far deeper than its smooth surface may first suggest.<sup>888</sup> Such a jumbled yet oddly cohesive image is exactly what appeals to the child's mind, for whom the freedom to construct, disentangle, construct, and synthesise enhances the creative and emotional experience: "Children need what may best be conveyed as only piecemeal. In fragments. By means of zigzags, with stops, coughs, clumsy interruptions, and by means of approximations.

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<sup>886</sup> Felicia McCarren, "The 'Symptomatic Act' circa 1900: Hysteria, Hypnosis, Electricity, Dance", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1995), 758.

<sup>887</sup> Morita, "American in Paris", 120-121.

<sup>888</sup> Roger Fry, "The Artist's Vision" in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), 34.

With awkward gestures, re-enactments, blurred imagery, by displacement and metaphor.”<sup>889</sup>

Through Fuller’s ghostly and immaterial appearance of the free-moving shadow, her ability to appeal to her era’s fascination with the spirit world, and her capacity to embody both the frailty and power of the natural and supernatural worlds often associated with the quixotic and transient nature of the child, French critics “identified her with Symbolism, seeing in her work the perfect reciprocity between idea and symbol, the perfect evocation of an imprecise universe capable of any suggestion.”<sup>890</sup> This was corroborated by Mallarmé’s fascination with Fuller; for him she functioned “like a direct instrument of thought”, whose dance not only provided a site of expression for the unconscious, but whose grasp of the concept of *déroulement* adopted a visually-stimulating format under her “vast corollas suspended on bamboo sticks, which concealed all feminine contour and suggest metamorphoses [as she] swirled in ecstasy.”<sup>891 892</sup> *Déroulement*, translating to mean ‘continuity’ or ‘rolling out’, refers to the notion of a ceaseless continuum of movement and transformation, physical or otherwise. Whilst such arabesque sinuosity, invigorated with the energy of both the natural and supernatural worlds, proved popular amongst Symbolists, not least in its embodiment of Orientalist forms and themes, its dynamism and sense of ongoing resurgence and renewal, as well as

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<sup>889</sup> Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood*, 97.

<sup>890</sup> Sally R. Sommer, “Loïe Fuller”, *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1975), 58.

<sup>891</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé quoted in Morita, “American in Paris”, 117.

<sup>892</sup> Marie-Françoise Christout, “Review: *The Dancing Muse of the Belle Époque*”, trans. Barbara Palfy. *Dance Chronicle*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1996), 215.

unpredictable autonomy, had a resonance with both the image of the free-moving shadow, and by extension, the paradox of the evergreen ephemerality of youth.<sup>893</sup>

In an 1893 article dedicated to dance artistry, Mallarmé wrote of Fuller thus:

“Her performance, *sui generis*, is at once an artistic intoxication and an industrial achievement. In that terrible bath of materials swoons the radiant, cold dancer, illustrating countless themes of gyration. From her proceeds and expanding web – giant butterflies and petals, unfoldings – everything of a pure and elemental order. She blends with the rapidly changing colours which vary their lime-lit phantasmagoria of twilight and grotto, their rapid emotional changes – delight, mourning, anger; and to set these off, prismatic, either violent or dilute as they are, there must be the dizziness of soul made visible by an artifice”.<sup>894</sup>

Much of Fuller’s appeal to Mallarmé, and indeed to Symbolists in general, was her unique skill in fulfilling through dance the desired artistic achievement of suggestion as opposed to description. Instead of pandering to the scopophilic blindness of most Western dance performances, her displays not only exposed the spectator to a style reflective of the Oriental exoticism sought in escape of urban modernity, but also required her audience to broaden their understanding of somatic expression and to therefore look through and reflect as opposed to looking at and

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<sup>893</sup> Various aspects of Orientalism permeated Fuller’s performances; from her use of materials such as silk and bamboo, to her rejection of formal dance in favour of unorthodox arabesques (whose etymological roots alone point to its Eastern roots), her embodiment of all that offered flight from urban mundaneness rendered her something of a personification of the exotic and non-Western.

<sup>894</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, “Considerations sur l’art du ballet et de Loïe Fuller”, 1893, quoted in Sommer, “Fuller”, 58.

devouring, inviting what Mallarmé called a “transparent prolongation” of insight rather than just sight.<sup>895</sup>

In this way, she is the real-life moving incarnation of the Symbolist shadow or silhouette, an ethereal embodiment of the ephemerality of life and childhood. This image was emphasised further by not only her frequent use of children from her dance company in her performances, “encircled by these silken environments, gambolling about with their free and unaffected movements, seem[ing] to represent the fragility and nobility of human spirit” (fig. 6.18), but also her own rejection of traditional Western dance and choreography that amplified the alluring appeal of the female body and instead fixated on the frivolous ease with which light “plays on your plump childish body.”<sup>896 897</sup> She is at once something of a phantom-like enchantress, symbolising “ideal visions of eternity” as well as a child-like reminder of the transience of real life.<sup>898</sup>

Fuller’s popularity in artistic circles did not end with the Symbolists. Her presence in the artwork of prevalent avant-garde practitioners of the day marked her role as both an innovator and inspirer of artistic endeavours of late-nineteenth century France. The coinciding of Fuller’s dance phenomenon with the development of photography and cinema sealed her photographic rendering forever, with numerous short films and photographs of Fuller dancing still in existence today. The work of early photographers such as Frederick Glasier (fig. 6.19), Isaiah West Taber (fig. 6.20) and Theodore C. Marceau (fig. 6.21) provide evidence of Fuller’s art

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<sup>895</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, “Crayonné au théâtre”, *Œuvres complètes*, eds. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris : Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1984), 311.

<sup>896</sup> Sommer, “Fuller’s Art”, 399.

<sup>897</sup> “Petit Billet de la Semaine: A Miss Loïe Fuller”, *Le Monde Artiste*, 18 December 1892, trans. Sommer, in Sommer, “Fuller’s Art”, 393.

<sup>898</sup> M. Rastignac, “Courrier de Paris”, *L’Illustration*, January 30 1893, 26.

which is free, to a greater extent than with other works, of more considerable stylistic imprints from the artist. These works offer a snapshot of the mesmerising shapes, light effects and colours of Fuller's dances, capturing the reality of the endless rippling of the iridescent fabric.

Aside from Symbolism, Fuller was probably most principally associated with the Art Nouveau movement. Not only was she the incarnate of the "major obsession of the art of 1900", the supple-bodied, cherub-like woman, clad in ample robes and with flowing hair, but her innovation in movement elevated her further.<sup>899</sup> Her simultaneous presentation of both "the chaste nude enveloped in transparent veils" and a seemingly never-ending metamorphosis of natural elements rendered her the perfect embodiment of her epoch: "Through her unique combination of light and motion, Fuller was Art Nouveau personified. Her dance, inspired by natural elements like fire, lilies, butterflies or clouds, effectively representation its spirit."<sup>900</sup> Consider, for example, the striking resemblance between Fuller's billowing fans of fabric in Glasier's portrait (fig. 6.19) and the feathery petals of William Morris' flowers in *Pimpernel* (fig. 6.15); she is an ephemeral and transitory being, encapsulating both Oriental and fantastical otherworldliness. With particular reference to Marceau's photograph (fig. 6.21), it is difficult to disagree with Jules Claretie's assertion that Fuller was something of "an elusive fairy, a magic princess

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<sup>899</sup> Claude Quiguer, *Femmes et machines de 1900: lecture d'une obsession modern style* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979), 26.

<sup>900</sup> Margaret Haile Harris, "The Dancer, the Artist and the Critic: A Celebration of Loïe Fuller by Pierre Roche and Roger Marx", *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1890-1940*, No. 3 (1979), 15.

<sup>901</sup> Morita, "American in Paris", 117.

of pearly tints, of opalescent and evanescent beams, of blue flames and pink flames that flash in her wake like a trail of rose petals”.<sup>902</sup>

It is perhaps more interpretative artworks, such as those of French sculptors Pierre Roche (1855-1922) and Raoul-François Larche (1860-1912), and renowned painter and poster artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) which provided a more expressive reaction to Fuller’s influence on the artistic world. Roche and Larche both produced a sculpture of the dancer (figs. 6.22 and 6.23 respectively), and although working in solid bronze, achieved the same fluidity of movement as to suggest the liquid metamorphosis of Fuller’s dance. The minute folds of her skirts evidenced in the photographs of the dancer can be seen reproduced in the fluted shapes of bronze to such an extent that the metal appears to have been poured in a continuous motion; she is at once solid and liquid, natural and supernatural, and like the child, there and then not.

This contradiction manifests itself also in the spirituality of Fuller’s dance, for whilst her appearance and movement is so often likened to that of simplicity and the innocent beauty of nature, its ethereality and frequent connection to the dark fascination with the séance gave rise to more satanic imagery: “she agitates the spangled scarves which scintillate in the infernal gleams of subterranean fires.”<sup>903</sup> Whilst influenced by his interest in botany, Roche was also taken with the fiery and fire-like aspects of Fuller’s performances: “each of her movements was a burst of flame and her scarves like firebrands emitting sparks”.<sup>904</sup>

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<sup>902</sup> Jules Claretie quoted in Sommer, “Fuller”, 62.

<sup>903</sup> Roger Marx, “Une Rénovatrice de la Danse”, *Le Musée*, March 1 (1907), 99.

<sup>904</sup> Pierre Roche, “Une Artiste Décorateur: La Loïe Fuller”, *L’art Décoratif*, Vol. 10 (1907), 170.

It is perhaps this sense of raw, unimpinged energy which also appealed to Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who produced numerous artworks inspired by Fuller. It is probably his 1893 colour lithograph *Miss Loïe Fuller* (fig. 6.24), reproduced in varying hues, which, distinctly abstract and ambiguous, though strikingly sinuous and fluid with arabesque, most concisely represents Lautrec's unique relationship with movement, space, and form, as well as the ways in which his visionary artwork paved the way for future styles. Being that his lithographs were "not actual portraits of Loïe Fuller but were, rather, attempts on the part of the artist to interpret the colour or movement (or both) of her draperies", Lautrec was chiefly concerned with representing the body's movement through a two-dimensional surface, thereby "stripping the pictorial image of its superfluous references to the object, transforming object into a simple, abbreviated, concentrated, evocative symbol."<sup>905</sup>

<sup>906</sup> Lincoln F. Johnson Jr. explained Lautrec's unusual style and technique by contrasting it with those of Edgar Degas, similarly famed for his depiction of movement and dance (and studied at length in Chapter Three), summarising his findings thus: "In short, Degas worked with volumes; Lautrec worked with planes [...] Degas depicted the human being in motion; Lautrec created a figure for the motion itself", therefore reiterating the preference for movement itself over that which moves.<sup>907</sup>

Relinquishing the shackles of anatomical logic by which Degas was mostly bound, like the emancipation of the previously constrained and pigeonholed child, Lautrec "liberated shapes and lines from their descriptive function, [placing]

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<sup>905</sup> Harris, "The Dancer", 15.

<sup>906</sup> Lincoln F. Johnson, "Time and Motion in Toulouse-Lautrec", *College Art Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1956), 21.

<sup>907</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

emphasis on the contour, the silhouette, and the plane [until] the body transformed into a graphic sign which possesses an inherent suggestive force” not unlike the innate essence of truth now believed to reside within the child.<sup>908</sup> Lautrec’s abstraction of the body into unfettered forms of movement not only gave rise to the concept of fluctuating shapes in the future work of artists such as Jean Arp and Joan Miró, but was also linked to a preoccupation with his own physical disability.<sup>909</sup> In light of this, Lautrec’s artwork can be understood as a sort of wistful manifestation of his desires for the sort of freedom of movement his disability prevented, and by extension, for the sort of bodily and psychological sinuosity and suppleness as believed typical of and represented by the shadow child. Lautrec’s 1893 depiction of Fuller encompasses this longing for the weightless fluidity of movement which seemed for many, though especially to him, so utterly abstract and removed from the capacities of the human body as he knew it.

As Johnson summarises, motion for Lautrec becomes as much about perception and belief as it does logical capability:

“probably the most completely abstract and prophetic work of the fin-de-siècle, Lautrec succeeded [in *Miss Loïe Fuller*] in expressing the change in appearance of the dancer over a period of time quite literally [...] the flame-like movement of the scarf, swelling, contracting, and undulating, is succinctly summarised in the very character of the shape, in its active

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<sup>908</sup> Johnson, “Time and Motion”, 14-15.

<sup>909</sup> Lautrec’s parents were first cousins, and he suffered from various congenital health conditions often attributed to inbreeding. The most obvious example in Lautrec’s case was his extreme shortness and corresponding discomfort. As a result of weak bones, he fractured both femurs as a young teenager, both of which failed to heal properly due to unconfirmed further genetic disorders, meaning that his legs ceased to grow and he reached a peak height of just 4 foot 8 inches, and struggled to participate in most physical activities.



contour, in the suggestion of opposing axes within the single form [but] any change is merely metaphorical; the image remains essentially static until the observer invests it with life or perceives the potentiality of movement in it.”<sup>910</sup>

In the same way that Fuller’s performances beseeched involvement from the audience, drawing from them an investment in the bodily and spiritual capabilities of dance as profound as her own contribution, Lautrec’s artworks function in tandem with the viewer’s efforts, relying on a sense of vision and belief beyond the literal. Like the liberated shadow, previously limited by its mere secondary function, symbolic of the previously oppressed but recently autonomous child, Lautrec’s depiction of Fuller, and by extension the moving body, is one of such freedom, abstraction, and imagination that it transcends the slick delineations of black and white imposed by the typical adult, permeating the environment, akin to that of childhood, of the in-between in which one can be hidden or revealed, an independently moving shadow neither here nor there.

The role of imagination and sense of suspended reality was as much a part of Fuller’s dance itself as the artwork she inspired and the environment of child’s play by which she was metaphorically connected. Fuller’s unusual style, coupled with her employment of trickery enabled by a clever inversion of the diorama and magic lantern style, coincided with and maximised upon an obsession at this time with the spirit world.<sup>911</sup> This became enhanced further in France by the work of figures such

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<sup>910</sup> Johnson, “Time and Motion”, 20-21.

<sup>911</sup> Whereas in the cases of the diorama and the magic lantern it was the image which moved as projected onto a screen, Fuller inverted this, functioning herself as the screen which moves instead.

as neurologists Jean-Martin Charcot and Hippolyte Bernheim, who led and published swathes of research into mental illness, hysteria and hypnotism in the 1880s and 1890s. The sheer ethereality of Fuller's dance style was not only reminiscent of the sort of dark, shadowy magic found in the playroom, but it bore many similarities to common conceptions of hysterical or hypnotised people. Fuller freely admitted to playing upon this particular comparison for dramatic effect: like a shadow without origin or root, "Fuller pretended to be hypnotised, moving about as if in a trance, the performance mode was ethereal, unearthly, disembodied [...] it was movement uncomplicated by *persona*."<sup>912</sup>

This is by no means a new connection in itself; not only has dance in the West long been considered "either a representation of madness [...] or a manifestation of order, through individual or social control of the body [but] dance and medicine resemble one another remarkably in their histories of 'discovering', or constructing, new realities for the body."<sup>913</sup> This was the case both in cultural and societal readings of bodily behaviour, evidenced by the immediate connections made between Fuller's performances and manifestations of mental illness, but also within the medical profession, where late-nineteenth century French medicine still employed the terminology *choreas* to describe certain forms of hysteria due to their perceived visual proximity to dance.<sup>914</sup> Fuller's contribution is steeped all too well in her own awareness of its symbolism; not only does she respond to the medical and cultural connection between dance and hysteria by employing, in her own way,

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<sup>912</sup> Sommer, "Fuller", 57.

<sup>913</sup> McCarren, "'Symptomatic Act'", 748.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid., 749. "Chorea" derives from the Greek "χορεία" which means "dance", and is probably most commonly found today in the term "choreography", which describes the composition of a dance.

OED: Oxford English Dictionary, 'chorea',

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/32310?redirectedFrom=chorea#eid> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016).

the clinician's tools of hypnosis and electricity, but the elaborate shapes she sometimes creates with her skirts (fig. 6.19) "bear an uncanny resemblance to a contemporary illustration of a uterus from *Le Progrès Medical*", potentially functioning not only as a reference to the etymological link between the word hysteria and an old word for the womb, but also as what Felicia McCarren calls a "wry commentary on the fact that Fuller's world de-anatomises femininity, redefining it as movement rather than structure."<sup>915</sup>

In many ways, Fuller's performances function through duality, for "hysterics occupy the paradoxical position of passive victim and star of their own spectacular theatre of suffering; [a] charged theatre [of] bipolar semiotics".<sup>916</sup> Fuller's sense of doubling is far more complex than a mere contradictory melange of self-denigration and self-elevation however, for her dualism extends beyond playing both the master of the stage and the mistress of her audience. Throughout her career, Fuller maintained a notion of harbouring two identities; that of the performer and that of the choreographer. However, she also frequently made ambiguous claims that she was not in fact the woman on stage at all, implying a sense of having relinquished her own body in some sort of splitting of identity.<sup>917</sup>

This becomes facilitated further by the use of electricity in a manner that both symbolises and subverts treatments used to combat mental illness. By controlling the electricity that enables her own 'hypnotism' and 'hysteria', not only

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<sup>915</sup> McCarren, "'Symptomatic Act'", 771. The word "hysteria" is linked to the prefix "hystero", meaning "of the womb, uterine", due to its origins in the Greek term "ὑστέρα" meaning "womb". OED: Oxford English Dictionary, 'hystero-', <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/90647#eid1067988> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016).

<sup>916</sup> Elin Diamond, "Realism and Hysteria: Toward and Feminist Mimesis", *Discourse*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1991), 63-64.

<sup>917</sup> Loïe Fuller, *Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life, with Some Account of Her Distinguished Friends*, (New York: Dance Horizons, 1978), 142.

is “her position analogous [both] to that of the patient but also to that of the doctor [but] Fuller uses electricity to create a climate in which the divided or multiplied performing subject can flourish, the very division of multiplicity that the clinician attempts to collapse in electroshock treatments of hysterical patients”.<sup>918</sup> Whilst Fuller insisted that this practice functioned as a positive sense of duality as opposed to a dangerous fracturing, it is this very multiplicity of identity and meaning upon which her performances hinged; “this mobile subjectivity, created by her art, becomes the subject of her art.”<sup>919</sup>

This sense of duality, on both bodily and psychological levels, provides a symbolic link to the very nature of childhood and being a child. That is to say, the child’s experience is one of being neither here nor there, between birth and becoming a recognised person in adulthood, of residing in a constant flux of the in-between, which is fed by both the condescension towards the ‘incompleteness’ and indefiniteness of the child in an overtly demarcated, black-and-white, adult-centric society, and the growing propensity of the child to frequent the shadowy no-man’s-land which lies in between and beyond the constructed boundaries and which was accumulating a profound sense of autonomy with the onset of modernity in earnest. Symbolised by the notion of a rootless shadow, unweighted and free-moving, the experience of the child is one of bodily and psychological ‘betwixt-ness’, constantly shifting and undulating in endless veils and sheaths of grey as much in physical movement and development as in mental and imaginative pondering and contemplation.

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<sup>918</sup> McCarren, ““Symptomatic Act””, 761-62.

<sup>919</sup> Ibid., 756.

The notion of the shadow as an autonomous figure in its own right, a very tangible yet rootless image that symbolises the child, was reflected in J.M. Barrie's famous character Peter Pan, who himself first emerged in 1902.<sup>920</sup> On the one hand, Peter's shadow functions as both an extension of his childish impishness and as an additional character full of personality in its own right; Peter frequently finds himself having 'lost' his shadow, for it seems to manage to surreptitiously relinquish his body and slip away to cause mischief, resulting in Peter embarking on chases and scuffles in order to fetch it back and reattach it.

On the other hand, Peter's shadow can be understood as a component of a deeper metaphor at play in Barrie's novel. In her 1991 paper 'Magic Abjured: Closure in Children's Fantasy Fiction' Sarah Gilead analyses in some detail what she perceives to be Peter's embodiment of not only repressed adult wishes over the absence or loss of childhood, but often in a deeply tragic way, "both the seductive force and the dangerous potentiality of fantasy."<sup>921</sup> Gilead's argument manifests itself chiefly in her application of the concept of 'the return', a theory commonly attributed to and discussed by Freud. Essentially, and rather poignantly given the recurring theme of duality, Gilead views Peter Pan as something of a paradox, for not only is he a celebration of the "adult's romantic view of childhood as the liberated imagination itself", but through his demonstration of Freud's "compulsion to repeat", he functions as a reminder of the ephemerality of childhood and life in

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<sup>920</sup> Peter first appeared in the chapter 'Peter Pan in Kensington Garden' in *The Little White Bird* (1902), which was published individually in 1906. The character also appeared in the 1904 stage play *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, which was later reworked into a novel by Barrie entitled *Peter and Wendy* in 1911.

<sup>921</sup> Sarah Gilead, "Magic Abjured: Closure in Children's Fantasy Fiction", *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (1991), 278.

general.<sup>922 923</sup> That is to say, in rather sombre terms, “the existence of the next generation guarantees the expendability of the present.”<sup>924</sup> Consequently, by quite decisively being “the boy who *would not* grow up” this highly symbolic character of Peter lays his own trap.<sup>925</sup>

Gilead summarises her analysis thus: “Forever young, he embodies the adult obsession with time and death. Peter is at once the idealised child and the regressive, impotent adult who is compelled to kidnap the very concept of childhood to alleviate the intolerable burden of adult existence. Free of mortality, sexuality, and social responsibility, Peter is imprisoned by his inability to grow up. Condemned to repeat the same story of denial with each generation and insatiably hungry for new stories, Peter exemplifies the unacknowledged power of children’s literature over adults.”<sup>926</sup> In this way, ‘Never-Never Land’ is not, as it ostensibly appears, the antithesis of the adult world, but rather an eerie extension of it.<sup>927</sup> Like a fairytale, Peter Pan and his world seem to offer an escape from the burdens and limitations of reality, but are actually laced with magnetising reminders of this reality which inevitability entices our return. Whilst Gilead’s theory is fulsome and addresses darker themes, it is free of any mention of Peter’s shadow, and any significance it may carry in her argument and any others on the subject of the interplay between art, children and shadows.

In many ways, Peter’s shadow can be understood as symbolic of the ephemerality of childhood and the qualities of freedom, imagination and mischief

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<sup>922</sup> Gilead, “Magic Abjured”, 285.

<sup>923</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Publishing, 2003), 145.

<sup>924</sup> Gilead, “Magic Abjured”, 286.

<sup>925</sup> “Children’s Stories in Sculpture: Peter Pan in London”, *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (1964), 188.

<sup>926</sup> Gilead, “Magic Abjured”, 285.

<sup>927</sup> Simon M. Elliott, “The Problem Play in British Drama, 1890-1914” in *Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Poetic Drama and Poetic Theory*, ed. James Hogg, (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1978), 227-229.

with which it is associated. On occasion, it quite literally overshadows the character himself, dictating activities by misbehaving and disappearing and thus requiring reining in. The eventual necessity of the shadow to return to Peter is symbolic of the inevitable return to reality that we must accept either when maturing into an adult or when having regressed, often through literature or artwork, to an earlier stage of one's life. This free and whimsical shadow, dancing about with weightless liberty, will ultimately find itself recaptured and tethered to real life on Earth. The repetitive return by which Peter enjoys seemingly ceaseless youth is mirrored and in fact facilitated tragically by the inevitable return to reality by which everyone is bound to some degree or another: "only after childhood ends can the adult reconstitute it as the object of desire, so that the concept originates in loss."<sup>928</sup>

In part, this may have been influenced by Barrie's own personal acknowledgement of the power of imagination, not a child's ability to exist in a fantasy world largely of his or her own construction, and indeed the everlasting appeal this presents to adults faced with an often grimmer reality, but also in instances when trauma and loss trigger nostalgic obsession. For example, Barrie's brother David, his mother's favourite, died in an ice-skating accident aged thirteen, and consequently a six-year-old Barrie soon "learnt from his mother's pre-occupation with his dead brother that things that do not exist physically can be more important in people's minds than things that do exist."<sup>929</sup> Peter Pan, something of "a 'betwixt-and-between'", and emphasised by the multifarious role of his shadow, can

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<sup>928</sup> Gilead, "Magic Abjured", 286.

<sup>929</sup> 'Peter Pan and Wendy: How J.M. Barrie Understood and Demonstrated Key Aspects of Cognition', University of Cambridge, August 3 2016, <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/peter-pan-and-wendy-how-j-m-barrie-understood-and-demonstrated-key-aspects-of-cognition>.

be understood as a dualistic reminder of fantasy and reality, childhood and adulthood, and the complex relationship thereof.<sup>930</sup>

It was Barrie who also once wrote:

“It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking in their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day... It is like tidying drawers... when you wake in the morning the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on.”<sup>931</sup>

Not only does this point to the general sense of control, although dressed in a garb of nurturance, of the parent over the child which characterises most behaviours in the household realm and beyond in this period, but it is more specifically indicative of adult attempts to govern specific childhood environments, and by extension the psychological and mental annexes to these physical arenas. Whilst children, as symbolised by the whimsical and free-moving shadow, prove as much products of the art that they inspire, they in turn become artistic creators in their own right; in much the same way that for the Symbolists, the shadows produce the forms, children can produce art. In these instances and at this stage, this refers to the unofficial and often rather unfathomable production or creation at the hands of the

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<sup>930</sup> ‘Peter Pan and Wendy’, University of Cambridge.

<sup>931</sup> J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan: The Story of Peter and Wendy* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1911), 12.



child, often manifesting itself during play or at rest, in an environment composed of imagination and experimentation, as opposed to the well-documented child art spearheaded by modernists. Indeed, for unlike the supposed ‘free-drawing’ of the child embraced and perhaps a little guided by adults in the twentieth century, these early manifestations of artistic creation are as flimsy, unrestrained, and ineffable as the shadow itself.

Returning to Barrie’s image of the rummaging, reorganising mother, much artistic creation on the part of the child, mental or otherwise, takes place in the dual site of play and rest; the bedroom. In both play and rest, children seek spaces of “comfort and security, but also of concealment and separation”, relying upon these “places of refuge, sites of interiority and solitude” in order to practice an art unassailable by adult interference.<sup>932 933</sup> Whilst Winnicott has stated that “the playing child inhabits an area that cannot be easily left, nor can it easily admit intrusion”, this applies as much to its seclusion and privacy on a mental level as it does the physical boundaries often erected by the creative child at play.<sup>934</sup> This may in part be an attempt to prevent further muddying of what is already the very complex arena of behaviours, experiences, and emotions for the playing and creating child. For Susan Stewart, the child at play is immersed in “an entirely new temporal world” which straddles private and external spheres, a sort of interweave built upon the “fluidity of children’s inner and outer lives, [for] young children slip back and forth between their private worlds of imagination and the domain of shared cultural experience.”<sup>935 936</sup>

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<sup>932</sup> Ellen Brooks quoted in Spitz, *Brightening Glance*, 150.

<sup>933</sup> Spitz, *Brightening Glance*, 133.

<sup>934</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 69.

<sup>935</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 57.

Accordingly, the child's world of play, rest, and creative production is not impermeable to external factors and influences; in fact, the shadowiness of its very nature is defined by free-movement between inner and outer, creating a melange of experience, perception, imagination, and creation. Rather, its reticence to adult intrusion is less in aid of reducing a muddying influence, but on the contrary, to prohibit the tidy arrangement of thoughts and ideas, toys and creations, into the neat, black-and-white compartments of the adult world. In much the same way that adults do not understand the emotional significance of the physical "aesthetic of mess" that must be allowed to flourish for the sake of externalising otherwise interior clutter, they also wish to firmly separate inner from outer, fantasy and reality, in order to cleanly reiterate a grounded and sensible outlook.<sup>937</sup>

However, Selma Fraiberg retorts that "the child's contact with the real world is strengthened by his periodic excursions into fantasy."<sup>938</sup> Whilst the bulk of Fraiberg's contribution to the field of child psychoanalysis focused on the perceptive capacities of blind children, this proves perhaps surprisingly apt, for her assertions on the underestimated abilities of the child to engage with a great variety of stimuli and sensory offerings can be attributed the innate perceptiveness and insightfulness of the child, blind or otherwise. Indeed, the tendency of the "content of a dream [to] oftentimes insert itself into the stream of real life in a most perplexing way" is indicative of a general liability between fantasy and reality in the mind of the child, awake or asleep, and to which they owe much of their creative inspiration.<sup>939</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Spitz, *Brightening Glance*, 6.

<sup>937</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>938</sup> Selma Fraiberg, *The Magic Years* (New York: Fireside, 1959), 23.

<sup>939</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*.

Perhaps inspired by Jung's cohesive view of intermingling interior and exterior worlds having "'dividing walls' [which] are transparent", art theorist Ellen Handler Spitz's analogy of the window goes some way to illustrate the translucency and fluid permeability of worlds central to the experience and environment of play.<sup>940</sup> A ubiquitous symbol of every child's playroom or bedroom, the window opens up a space between inside and outside, but also comes to represent a flimsy veil to be negotiated during play: "a translucent membrane suspended between fantasy and reality, a membrane that thickens and darkens as we grow older but never becomes entirely opaque [represented by] the window [which] exists to keep out what is real, but [...] can keep out *only* what is real, not what is unreal."<sup>941</sup> In other words, such an image presents the transparency which characterises this "intimate dyad" and ongoing flux of imagination, perception, and experience in the mind of the playing and creating child.<sup>942</sup>

Whilst we have to some extent established the role of the bedroom as a vehicle for explorations and expressions of a child's perceptions and imaginings, for example in Chapter Four, it becomes apparent on a more profound level "how like an artist's studio is the bedroom of a small child [...] filled with highly invested possessions, [becoming] a dual locus of security and discovery, of work and of rest", pouring out from the paint-pots of his mind onto the easel of his creative play environment.<sup>943</sup> In turn this points to Guillaume Apollinaire's assertion that art derives "not from the reality of sight, but from the reality of insight", which we have

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<sup>940</sup> C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Waukegan: Fontana Press, 1995), 389.

<sup>941</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *Inside Picture Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 58.

<sup>942</sup> Spitz, *Brightening Glance*, 4.

<sup>943</sup> Spitz, *Inside Picture Books*, 31.

come to realise resides so prominently within the searching mind of the child.<sup>944</sup> In the same way that a child does not rely upon official toys with which to play, his creativity is similarly unbound, for whilst his eyesight offers a survey of his surroundings from which he yields “a stock of images for [his] mental museums”, he then relies upon *insight*, employing “his mind [which] is similar to a *camera obscura* which [not only] reduces the great drama of life to manageable dimensions and lends reality to his every whim”, but allows for the piecing together of these dimensions to create a merging melange of perception and imagination.<sup>945 946</sup>

The advantages of such liberty to imagine, perceive, and create is symbolised by the elusive shadow of both body and soul. The foundations of the catapulting of the child into the realm of modern art in the twentieth century can be seen in the gradual relinquishment in the latter years of the previous century of the linear and monochromatic stipulations of the adult-controlled world in favour of the shadowy in-between to be found in amongst such polarities. These oftentimes shaded-out children re-emerge as the autonomous shadow, ephemeral yet seemingly never-ending as they transcend their prescribed outlines, reacting to produce in this way an “art of modernity” that pre-empt their theme in the art of *modernism*.<sup>947</sup> Thinking upon the singular joy of the child to contemplate and create in peace beneath his own shadowy veil of childish secrecy, to recall “how delicious [it was] to be there amidst the dank odours and eerie shadows we cast”, it seems difficult to disagree with Baudelaire’s assertion that such modern art was some sort of “evocative magic”, a form of black magic even, in which the mysteries of the adult-free

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<sup>944</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters, Aesthetic Meditations* (California: University of California Press, 2004), 227.

<sup>945</sup> Spitz, *Inside Picture Books*, 14.

<sup>946</sup> Galand, “Baudelaire’s Psychology”, 14.

<sup>947</sup> Schlossman, “Chapter Twelve”, 185.

environment of child's play and experimentation bubbled and stewed in the unfathomable and unreachable depths of the cauldron 'shadowlands'.<sup>948 949</sup> This then calls one to ponder, in view of the impending illumination and indeed harnessing of the soul and intrinsic truth of the child and the state of childhood by modernist artists and writers, "will all the magic dissipate in stark daylight?"<sup>950</sup>

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<sup>948</sup> Spitz, *Brightening Glance*, 153.

<sup>949</sup> Charles Baudelaire quoted in J.A. Hiddleston, "Chapter Nine", in *Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. Rosemary Lloyd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 130.

<sup>950</sup> Spitz, *Illuminating Childhood*, 192.

# CONCLUSION

## *Illuminating the Shadows*

“All accounts of childhood are, in the end, accounts of ourselves.”  
Anne Higonnet, *What do you want to know about children?*<sup>951</sup>

“Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away – an ephemeral apparition.”  
Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*<sup>952</sup>

The artists and writers discussed in this thesis, varied as they are in their individual experiences, aims, and ideas, are united in their fulfilment in some capacity of a role described by Carol Mavor as that of “an ancient little boy.”<sup>953</sup> Mavor’s oxymoron points to a process represented by these artistic and literary figures and their work, one which is assumed both consciously and subconsciously, by which a return to childhood and a child-like state is made by the adult. Manifesting itself variously and for numerous reasons, this return affords an array of opportunities for the adult, coloured by age, hindsight, and nostalgia, to enact upon their memories, concepts, and images of childhood, both personally and collectively. Appearing as a sort of renaissance, this return provides an occasion to once again participate in the past, to revisit, re-evaluate, and peace-make, to demystify, elucidate, and unpack, to embellish, exaggerate, and sensationalise, to remodel, distort, and conflate.

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<sup>951</sup> Anne Higonnet, “What do you want to know about children?” in *Picturing Children: Construction of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 205.

<sup>952</sup> C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Waukegan: Fontana Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>953</sup> Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 213.

It is in exploration and analysis of this process to which this thesis has been dedicated, and against whose procedures and conclusions it can now be further understood. By investigating how experiences, images, and the journey of the child and childhood on conceptual levels have been represented by intellectuals and cultural practitioners throughout the course of the French long-nineteenth century, negotiating the cultural, social, and scholarly 'shadowland' existence and in-between world of the child and childhood between the 'darkness' of pre-Enlightenment doctrine and the 'light' of twentieth-century modernist thought, the notion of the shadow as symbolic of the child itself as a magical, ephemeral, and changeable being has been established. This in turn offers some insight into the idea of the shadow child, either within us personally or as a conceptual figment, who has been revisited and harnessed by various figures for any number of personal or collective pursuits.

The 'shadowiness' of this topic in this particular period, that is to say, its complexity and ambiguity, gave rise to a fervent propensity amongst scholars and creatives to both explore and define. It is the processes and results of such endeavours that this thesis has investigated, examining the rhetoric of the child and childhood in how it has inspired and been reflected in the arts and literature of the French long-nineteenth century. By studying the scholarly, literary, and artistic output reflecting this period's varied approach towards and grasp of concepts and images of children and childhood, as well as the ways in which children and childhood were intellectually and creatively mobilised for a variety of personal, professional, or collective aims, this thesis has demonstrated and accounted for how artists and writers have reflected upon children and their condition, and the

implications thereof on social, cultural, intellectual, and personal levels. More specifically, symbolic of the reflective structural approach of the thesis, each case study has demonstrated an example of a retrospective consideration of the conceptual or personal ‘shadow child’ within.

Coveney argues that the long-nineteenth century was “an age [in which] it became increasingly difficult to grow up, to find valid bearings in an adult world.”<sup>954</sup> As a result, there was a tendency, as he puts it, to “take the line of least emotional resistance, and to regress, quite literally, into a world of fantasy and nostalgia for childhood.”<sup>955</sup> This is particular true of the French context, since “France [...] was a country befuddled, [for] when she looked around she seemed to be one of the last great hopes for liberal democracy in Europe, but she did not dare look around.”<sup>956</sup> Wedged in the constantly fluctuating chasm between tradition and modernity, convention and progression, the French long-nineteenth century was a period characterised by writers and artists who, “clearly very much abroad in an alien world, [sought] a regressive escape into the emotional prison of self-limiting nostalgia [through] the cult of the child”, in whatever form, style, or expression he or she may have taken or might have been assigned.<sup>957</sup> For as many causes, reasons, and designs as there were behind these figures’ return or regression to the childhood state, there emerged a twofold manifestation of this peculiar affliction of nostalgia comprising “those who wanted to go back to the beginning to begin again, and

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<sup>954</sup> Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 32.

<sup>955</sup> Ibid.

<sup>956</sup> Stacy Schiff, *Saint-Exupéry: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 279.

<sup>957</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 241.



others who wanted to just go back”, such was the often bleak complexity of the rapidly modernising world.<sup>958</sup>

In many ways, the undulating cross-over between old and new which characterised the French long-nineteenth century served as a backdrop which mirrored the child’s condition and experiences in this period. Between the poles of the pre-Enlightenment Dark Ages and the perceived enlightened epoch of twentieth-century modernity, between the markers of birth and adulthood, endures a most shadowy existence. This ‘shadowland’ is one whose constantly shifting layers of fading tonality and endlessly morphing shapes of ambiguity come to symbolise not only the obscurity with which these period was awash, but more particularly the multifaceted concepts, roles, images, and experiences of the ‘otherised’ child in this epoch. Their shadowiness is characterised not only by their perceived ‘otherness’, but by their role in negotiating an in-between world, straddling the crossroads of modernity and nature, fallacy and truth, imagination and reality, and the constant merging thereof in amongst the hurly-burly of a world caught between tradition and modernisation. The defining feature by which the topics, themes, figures, and works explored in this thesis can be united, lies in a modern understanding of the world of the child as one of shadows, a concept and image which is as oscillating as its name suggests.

As established in the Introduction, whilst Philippe Ariès is credited as the catalyst in bringing to the fore in the twentieth century the topic of children and childhood in the scholarly arena, and his interdisciplinary approach inviting future connections between pedagogy and art history, these have remained few and far

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<sup>958</sup> Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, 242, 35.

between. Furthermore, the inclusion of children or concepts of childhood in art historical studies, and *vice versa*, have remained somewhat incidental, occasionally addressing seemingly ancillary ideas and concepts in isolation or within a very limited contextual sphere. More specifically, attention has chiefly focused upon two oftentimes-considered polar points of significance and reference: the mid-late-eighteenth century clash between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, credited as a turning point in the establishment of scholarly and creative interest in children and childhood; and the cementing of the child and its condition and blueprint of modernist creative practice in the early twentieth century.

The period in between these two junctures, the long-nineteenth century, has attracted interest relating to this topic only in pockets; that is to say, crucially not in a fashion which examines the developmental process between these two points, and not within the specific context of France, whose turbulent political, social, and cultural history at this time offers a particularly interesting and revealing contextual focus. This thesis has drawn upon and addressed this scholarly chasm, bridging the gap by analysing the journey of the child and the concept of childhood through the literary and visual culture of the French long-nineteenth century, and uniquely operating under the metaphor of the shadow. By exploring the significant concepts, theories, and images which built upon post-Enlightenment thought and worked to pave the way for key modernist philosophies, this thesis offers an investigation into how these cultural milestones were connected throughout the changing environment of the era in between. By combining not only the study of children and childhood with that of art history, but also within the specific context of the French long-nineteenth century, this thesis provides an examination of both the developments

leading up to the ground-breaking emergence of modernism and the social and cultural history of children and children, but more crucially still, the complex and revelatory relationship between the two.

Through a series of thematic case studies, we have established various prominent ways in which the shadow metaphor can be understood to operate, as a reflection of society as a whole, in the visual and literary culture of the French long-nineteenth century. By beginning with the perceived ‘enlightened’ thought of twentieth-century modernism, the thesis has adopted a retrospective analysis of how and in what ways these views were established and developed throughout the course of the previous century. Whilst the metaphor of the shadow is one that, by its nature, eludes specific definition, our case studies suggest that we might characterise it in at least seven ways, as follows.

In the first instance, it is clear that for some, as evidenced in the case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that the shadow represented the perceived sully of the past, by age, experience, mistakes, or anxious hindsight. Whilst retrospective revisits to and reimaginings of childhood, personal or collective, were enacted variously and produced differing conclusions, for many, it presented an opportunity by which one could metaphorically bleach out the shadowy grubbiness of the past in order to make way for new, or newly-revised memories, histories, and ideas; a process which ultimately proved as damaging and false as that it sought to overturn.

Secondly, most particularly through the case studies of Victor Hugo and Edgar Degas, we have shown how the experiences and perceptions of childhood existed under a dark cloud symbolised by the image of the shadow. The environment of the child, “that desolate region which exists on the borders of the real and

fantastic” becomes something of a ‘shadowland’ where the neglected and lonely child finds itself engulfed, drowning in the enormous dark wave of modernity.<sup>959</sup> As adults looking back towards childhood, at what appears to be “the black storm through which we seem to have passed”, individuals produced creative expressions of childhoods experienced or recorded as imbued by a metaphorical darkness, a swallowing stretch of thick shadow representing the gloom and oppression under which they lived.<sup>960</sup>

Thirdly, for some, for example Marcel Proust and Odilon Redon, the significance of the shadow lay in its provision of a sort of womb-like sanctum not only in which the child could hide from the harshness of the outer world, but also to which the adult could return in his or her nostalgic regression to the unexposed opacity of youth’s “almost total darkness, in which the fog seemed to have extinguished the maps, [...] and one groped one’s way through a moist, warm, hallowed crib-like darkness in which there flickered here and there and dim light.”<sup>961</sup> The enclaves in which the shadow resides served as a comforting capsule in which one can adopt a sort of endolithic existence, an obscure shroud by which to escape the piercing brightness of modern life and thus embrace a sense of “‘naïveté’ [which] resists ‘the compulsion to adapt’” to a seemingly alien outer reality.<sup>962</sup>

Another aspect of the shadow metaphor, in some ways connected to the potential bleakness inherent to the ‘shadowlands’ of childhood, lies in the notion of the true nature of childhood often remaining hidden, either by virtue of its opacity,

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<sup>959</sup> Emile Hennequin, “Odilon Redon”, *Revue Littéraire et Artistique*, 4th March (1882), 136.

<sup>960</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume IV: Sodom and Gomorrah*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 440.

<sup>961</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume III: The Guermantes Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 458.

<sup>962</sup> Joseph Litvak, *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 78.

or in many cases, with the shadowiness becoming an opaque sheath or blanket of adult design, artifice, or misperception under which the reality of childhood, both painful and magical, lies. Whilst some case studies, such as that of Blaise Cendrars, made clear how this ‘hidden truth’ of childhood often gave rise to voyages of discovery, to efforts on the part of adults to uncover the unknown ‘other’ within the child, it also inspired creative individuals to adopt what they understood to be “a child-like, wondering attitude towards the world.”<sup>963</sup> In other words, explorations of the intricacies of childhood began to be mirrored by the process thereof, by the inquisitive perusal which gave rise to misconstrued findings and forced conclusions. Given that “for the French, all children are barbarians who must be tamed and moulded ruthlessly to adult standards” and desperate to make sense of this endless, dark tangle of unknowns, adults in general often endeavoured to forcibly fold these childish, shadowy articles into neat piles, as evidenced in the work of Charles Perrault, Edouard Manet, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and the image of the Jumeau doll, which ultimately further enshrouds them in an encasement of fallacy and misperception that destructively overshadows the truth inside.<sup>964</sup>

The shadowiness of childhood can also be understood in terms of its symbolism of part of what defines the truth and reality of childhood; its very lack of definition. In a world increasingly preoccupied by fixed and recognisable points of reference, the child and the state of childhood as unfulfilling of defined perimeters were to be located in the no-man’s-land in between, in the fog of the ‘shadowlands’ between the black and white socially-accepted polarities of birth and adulthood. In

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<sup>963</sup> Alessandra Comini, “Toys in Freud’s attic: torment and taboo in the child and adolescent themes of Vienna’s image-makers” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn R. Brown. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 173.

<sup>964</sup> Jesse R. Pitts quoted in Schiff, *Saint-Exupéry*, 31.

her exploration of figures deemed ‘boyish’, thus neither man nor boy, Mavor addressed this notion of the betwixt-and-between individual, discerning that “the ‘ish’ keeps them swishy: some more, some less, some very”, an image which resonates with the potential ‘swishiness’ of the shadow child and its ‘grey area’ world.<sup>965</sup> In this way, as evidenced in the artwork of various Symbolists artists, the child comes to operate within a sort of phantasmagorical world, a shadowy existence of neither here nor there, where the child becomes a sort of “great spirit, exist[ing] in the gaps between what is said and what is meant”, and in turn operates under a sort of philosophical and conceptual immortality and timelessness which contrasts its physical evanescence, enhancing its sense of appeal and enigma in both scholarly and creative contexts.<sup>966</sup>

This in turn points to one of the most significant aspects and conditions of the child and childhood symbolised by the shadow metaphor: their transience and ephemerality. Exemplified in the case study of Loïe Fuller and related artworks, the foggy, changeable, sheath-like appearance of the shadow along with its form existing in a seemingly constant flux of ethereal and ambiguous transformation, disappearing and reappearing in no identifiable pattern, is representative of the fugitiveness of the childhood state, an awareness of which gained significant gravitas with the rapid onset of modernity. The shadow-child in flux, represented by and “amid the ebb and flow of movement of the fugitive and the infinite”, becomes synonymous with modern life, for as Charles Baudelaire perceived the crowd as a sort of mirror reflecting one’s own tumultuous existence both in a physical and

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<sup>965</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 5.

<sup>966</sup> Pat Righelato, “Introduction” in Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*, (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2000),vi.

psychological sense, so the child's embodiment in the wispy shadow carried off in a gust of hurly-burly encapsulates the transience of youth and life in general as experienced in the modern world.<sup>967</sup> This truancy of vision and somewhat existentialist awareness of the ephemerality of life is embodied by the image of the shadow child floating away and disintegrating out of reach, the fragmentation and ultimate disappearance of childhood representing modernity's effects upon the self and soul.

It is out of this sense of ephemerality that the final facet of the shadow child concept emerges, that of the shadow as representative of the soul, truth, and essence of the self as located within the child. Built upon a strong scaffold of chiefly Symbolist art and other related forms of visual culture such as dance and photography, this is a notion which had gained particular weight alongside the fevered voyages of self-discovery which permeated literary and artistic output during the latter decades of the French long-nineteenth century. As the shadow gained a sort of pictorial and conceptual autonomy in art concurrent with the emerging autonomy of the child, thereby solidifying a metaphorical link between the child and the shadow, this further enhanced the notion that as representative of our truth, soul, and essence of self, both of these concepts and images combine to form a sort of shadow child which remains located deep within all of us, even as we age, a phantom of "the child we once were, but shall never be again."<sup>968</sup> The case study of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* offers a particularly effective example of this concept. The scholarly and creative practitioners with whom this thesis deals have been inspired

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<sup>967</sup> Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Art in France: This is the Modern World* (television programme), BBC4 (UK), 2017.

<sup>968</sup> James E. Higgins, "'The Little Prince': A Legacy", *Elementary English*, Vol. 37, No. 8 (1960), 515.

by the complex connection between childhood and selfhood, and thus how a rediscovery of the former, either on a personal or more collective level, facilitates a discovery and sort of emancipation of the latter. In this way, perhaps, drawing from “one of the most compelling dramas in childhood, [that of] being lost or imagining that one is lost”, the sense of being emotionally and psychologically adrift which pervaded artistic and literary production imbued with *fin-de-siècle* pessimism sought remedy in finding oneself again by revisiting the memories and perceptions of childhoods individual and shared.<sup>969</sup> In this way, artists and writers could reclaim the child as part of the adult, the part that would have continued to exist should one have not grown up, and who therefore can only live on through one’s memory and imagination as a sort of shadow of one’s former self.

Such a concept is reminiscent of the experience and fate of the famed writer of childhood, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. A trained pilot and great lover of aviation, Saint-Exupéry disappeared during a reconnaissance mission in 1944, and presumably lost his life when the plane he was flying was shot down over the sea. This notorious ancient little boy, whose own life comprised a drawn-out battle between the nostalgic joy of childhood and the corrosive melancholy of adulthood, was shot in mid-air, between earth and sky, forever paralysed in the in-between. Furthermore, this lethal shot, like a single moment captured in time, is suggestive of the increasingly popular medium of the photograph as another sort of shot. Both Saint-Exupéry’s sudden departure from earthly life, and the apparent momentariness of childhood can be understood through the symbol of the photograph, a shadowy, monochrome rendering of a life before it withers and disintegrates just as a shadow

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<sup>969</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, *Inside Picture Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 158.



fades with light. In this way, like the child and the state of childhood, “a photograph is but a shadow of what once was there, but is now gone.”<sup>970</sup> It is a concept that has resonated with various figures, not least Barrie, who felt throughout his life that his dead brother David, his mother’s favourite, lived on as a sort of crumpled shadow within him, such was his mother’s attachment to the child who once was, and in some ways, as having never grown up, always will be. This idea of the child as a sort of photograph, a “weightless, transparent envelope” in which personhood and memories can be carried or pass through like the endless floating of a smoky shadow, seems to account quite significantly for the adult artist’s or writer’s focus upon the child.<sup>971</sup> In 2002, French sculptor and photographer Christian Boltanski explained “I began to work as an artist when I began to be an adult, when I understood that my childhood was finished, and was dead. I think we all have somebody who is dead inside of us. A dead child”, thereby consolidating this notion of a shadow child which remains inside us not only as a reminder of what once was but no longer exists, but also as a sort of warning and appeal to preserve and cherish the child, its condition, and its memory before it fades and drifts away with time like little more than a wispy, ephemeral shadow: “ideas in the mind quickly fade and often vanish quite out of the understanding, leaving no more footsteps or remaining characters of themselves than shadows do flying over fields of corn.”<sup>972 973</sup>

As Larry Wolff mused, “if memory was the ‘source’ of personal identity, [...] then childhood was the delta into which its river irreversibly ran”, affording the

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<sup>970</sup> Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 56.

<sup>971</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 5.

<sup>972</sup> Christian Boltanski, “Studio’s Visit: Christian Boltanski”, *Tate Magazine*, Issue 2, Nov/Dec (2002).

<sup>973</sup> Larry Wolff, “When I Imagine a Child: The Idea of Childhood and the Philosophy of Memory in the Enlightenment”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1998), 384.

opportunity to immerse oneself in one's past or those imagined of others, until one loses oneself in "the unremembered sediment of personal alluvial deposits [thus] becoming a child again."<sup>974</sup> This exploration of the truth through the past, this discovery of one's personhood in the shadow child within, is subject to colouration. In the same way that "the memory of childhood was not a piece of vestigial mental matter, but rather [some of the] first strokes that marked the mind's white paper", this rediscovery could be compared to the process by which an old black and white photograph dug out from a dusty album, its fuzzy grey forms capturing a shadow shape in time, become coloured by the techniques and styles acquired by the passage of time.<sup>975</sup>

Similarly, this exploration of the shadows of childhoods past is in itself subject to the effects of a shadowing, a sort of "translucent membrane suspended between fantasy and reality, a membrane that thickens and darkens as we grow older but never becomes entirely opaque", and thus permits re-entrance at the right moment.<sup>976</sup> This re-entrance offers a doorway into a realm which seems infinitely deep, comprising the countless leagues of our experiences and personality within the "thousands of planes [of] the human mind, through which the intellect can range, each of which gives access to a different level of richness of detail in our memories", these planes combining to form the swathes of our past which make up the 'shadowland' of childhood and shadow child within.<sup>977</sup>

With the rapid, destabilising, and psychologically corrosive onset of modernity, during which empty priorities and longstanding falsehoods were slowly

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<sup>974</sup> Wolff, "Imagine a Child", 380.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>976</sup> Spitz, *Inside Picture Books*, 58.

<sup>977</sup> Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory: Childhood Recollection and Its Objects in Literary Modernism* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2011), 26.

called into question, a search for truth and genuine sense of selfhood was never so pressing. Such considerations and endeavours have been exemplified in the study of figures such as Charles Baudelaire, Paul Cezanne, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Henri Rousseau, and Roger Fry. Given that “les enfants se souviennent quand les hommes oublient, et leurs jeux parlent quand l’histoire se tait”, there emerged a melancholic reflection on one’s relinquishment of the magic and wisdom of childhood to gain admission into the empty world of adulthood symbolised by the metaphorical covering of the kaleidoscopic wonder of childhood with a dreary cloak of shadow thick with ignorance and obstinacy.<sup>978</sup> Accordingly, a re-immersion into the shadowy depths of childhood as a means of reliving and reclaiming what adulthood had served to whitewash, seemed the most effective and revelatory way of unpacking the past and finding the truth. Of course, this process often proved as destructive, conflating, and counter-productive as other more prominent voyages of discovery, both historical and ongoing, for as we wrap ourselves in these blankets of shadow, encumbering our own histories and the fate of a new generation with the notion that “children become the pattern and promise of futurity [...] for society as a whole”, we tend to lose sight in the shadowy haze that “not all children are ‘our’ future because not all children are ‘ours’ and because not all children promise or portend a desired future.”<sup>979</sup> <sup>980</sup> Our intentions, processes, and thus findings can become muddled by a knot of shadows too rashly untangled. Whilst it is often the

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<sup>978</sup> Edouard Fournier, *Histoire des Jouets et des Jeux d’Enfants* (Paris : E. Dentu, 1889), 94.

Translation: “Children remember when men forget, and their games speak when history keeps quiet.”

<sup>979</sup> Marina Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest”, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2009), 13.

<sup>980</sup> Daniel Thomas Cook, “A politics of becoming: When ‘child’ is not enough”. *Childhood*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015), 3.

case that “childhood is a mirror in which we can see ourselves young and old at the same time”, it is not nearly so often so clear a reflection as the metaphor suggests.<sup>981</sup>

When Ellen Handler Spitz considered “how like an artist’s studio is the bedroom of a small child, [...] filled with highly invested possessions, [...] a dual locus of security of discovery, of work and of rest”, she went some way to elucidating not only the innate and profound connection between childhood experiences and perceptions and the creative process, between the pursuit of truth and ‘making sense’ inherent to both the curious child and the disillusioned creative practitioner, but also the complex untidiness and blurred shadowiness intrinsic to both.<sup>982</sup> And so as with all endeavours of great worth and revelation, the pursuit of truth found in the shadow child within, through the journey into the ‘shadowlands’ of childhood, is an art that requires patience and delicacy. It is a careful lifting of each layer of one’s childhood, of each shadow of one’s past, memory, experience, and personhood so as to the reveal that which lies buried further beneath without damaging it, like the gradual rummaging of a child in the darkest nooks and crannies of a chest containing his or her most precious treasures. As Walter Benjamin once reflected, if “there exists for each individual an image around which the entire world appears to founder, for how many does that image not rise out of an old toy chest?”<sup>983</sup>

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<sup>981</sup> Alphonse Leroy, *Médecine Maternelle, ou l’art d’élever et de conserver les enfants* (Paris, 1803), xxii.

<sup>982</sup> Spitz, *Inside Picture Books*, 31.

<sup>983</sup> Walter Benjamin quoted in Warner, “Old Toy Chest”, 13.

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## CHAPTER ONE

*From the Twentieth Century to the Nineteenth Century: Revisiting the Shadows*

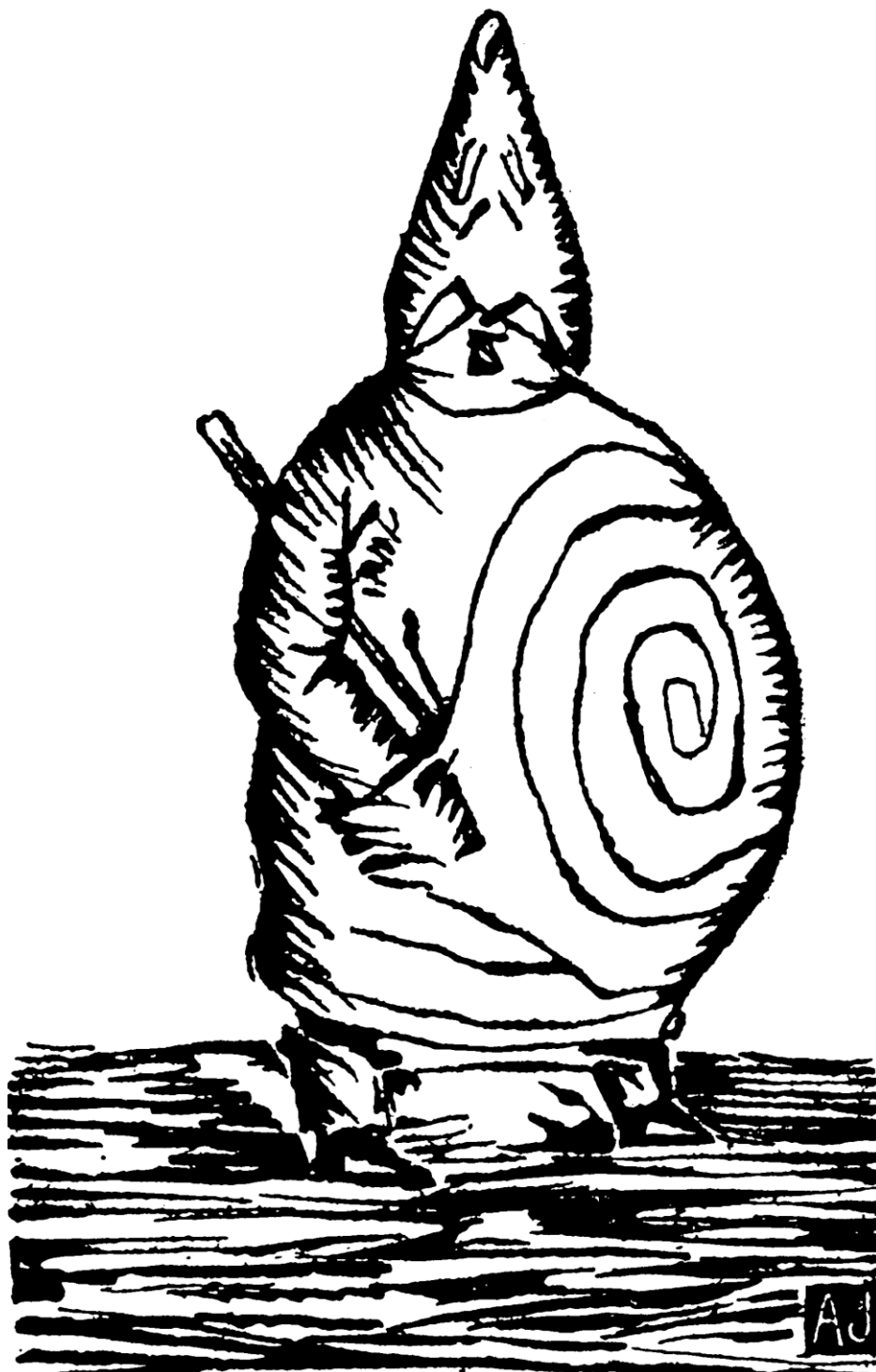


Fig. 1.1: Alfred Jarry, 1896  
Illustration in *Ubu Roi*, 2003  
Dover Publications, New York, United States of America



Fig. 1.2: Paul Cézanne, *Jas de Bouffan*, 1885-1887  
 Oil on canvas, 60.8 x 73.8cm  
 National Gallery in Prague, Czech Republic.

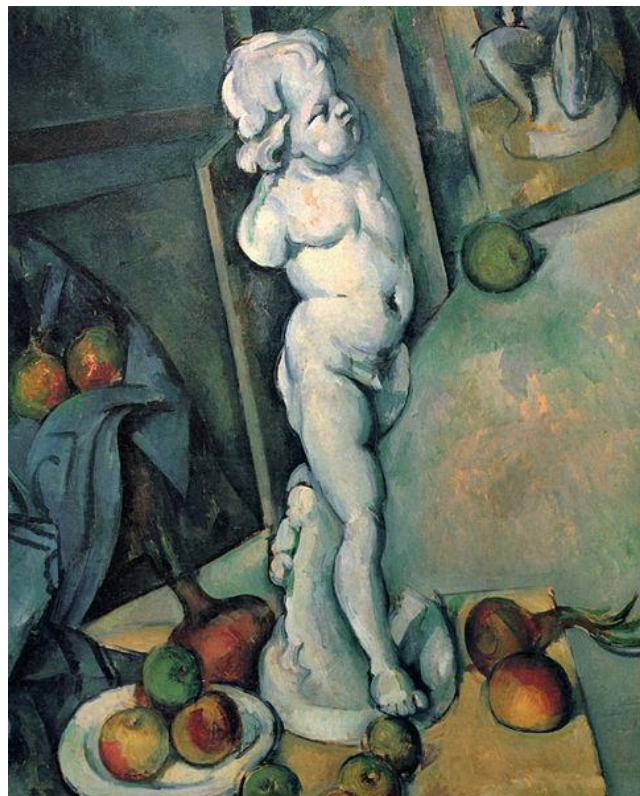


Fig. 1.3: Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Cherub*, c.1895  
 Oil on canvas, 57 x 70cm  
 Courtauld Institute of Art, London, United Kingdom.

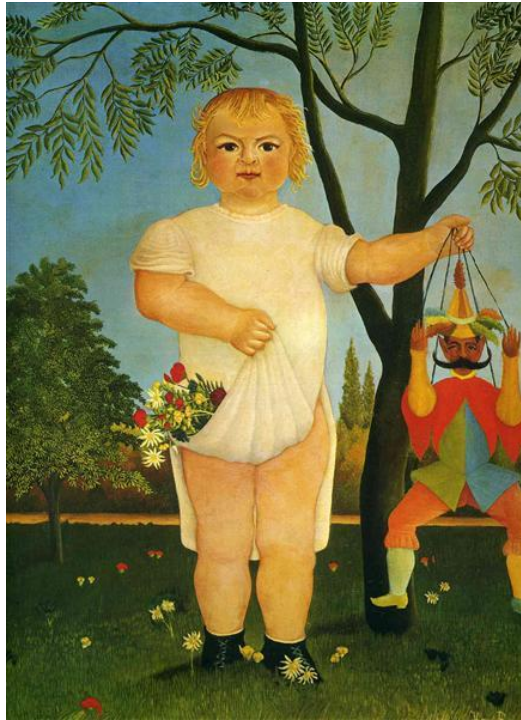


Fig. 1.4: Henri Rousseau, *Child with a Puppet*, c. 1903  
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Fig. 1.5: Henri Rousseau, *Child with a Doll*, 1892  
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Fig. 1.6: Henri Rousseau, *The Repast of the Lion*, 1907  
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Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 1.7: Henri Rousseau, *Struggle between Tiger and Bull*, c. 1909  
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55cm  
Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia.



Fig.1.8: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Marzella*, 1910  
Oil on canvas, 76 x 60cm  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.

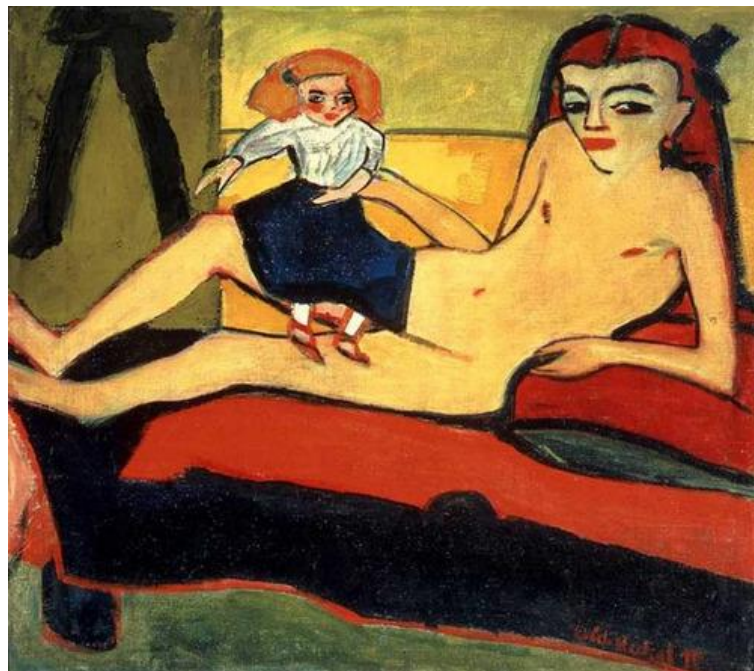


Fig. 1.9: Erich Heckel, *Girl with a Doll*, 1910  
Oil on cardboard  
Private collection.





Fig. 1.10: Henri Rousseau, *The Snake Charmer*, 1907  
Oil on canvas, 169 x 189.5cm  
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Fig. 1.11: Marcia Brown,  
Illustration in *La Féticheuse (The Shadow)*, p. 28-29, 1995  
Aladdin Paperbacks, New York, United States of America



Fig. 1.12: Marcia Brown  
 Illustration in *La Féticheuse (The Shadow)*, p. 12, 1995  
 Aladdin Paperbacks, New York, United States of America



Fig. 1.13: Marcia Brown  
 Illustration in *La Féticheuse (The Shadow)*, p. 3, 1995  
 Aladdin Paperbacks, New York, United States of America



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Romantic Enlightenment: Bleaching out the Shadows*

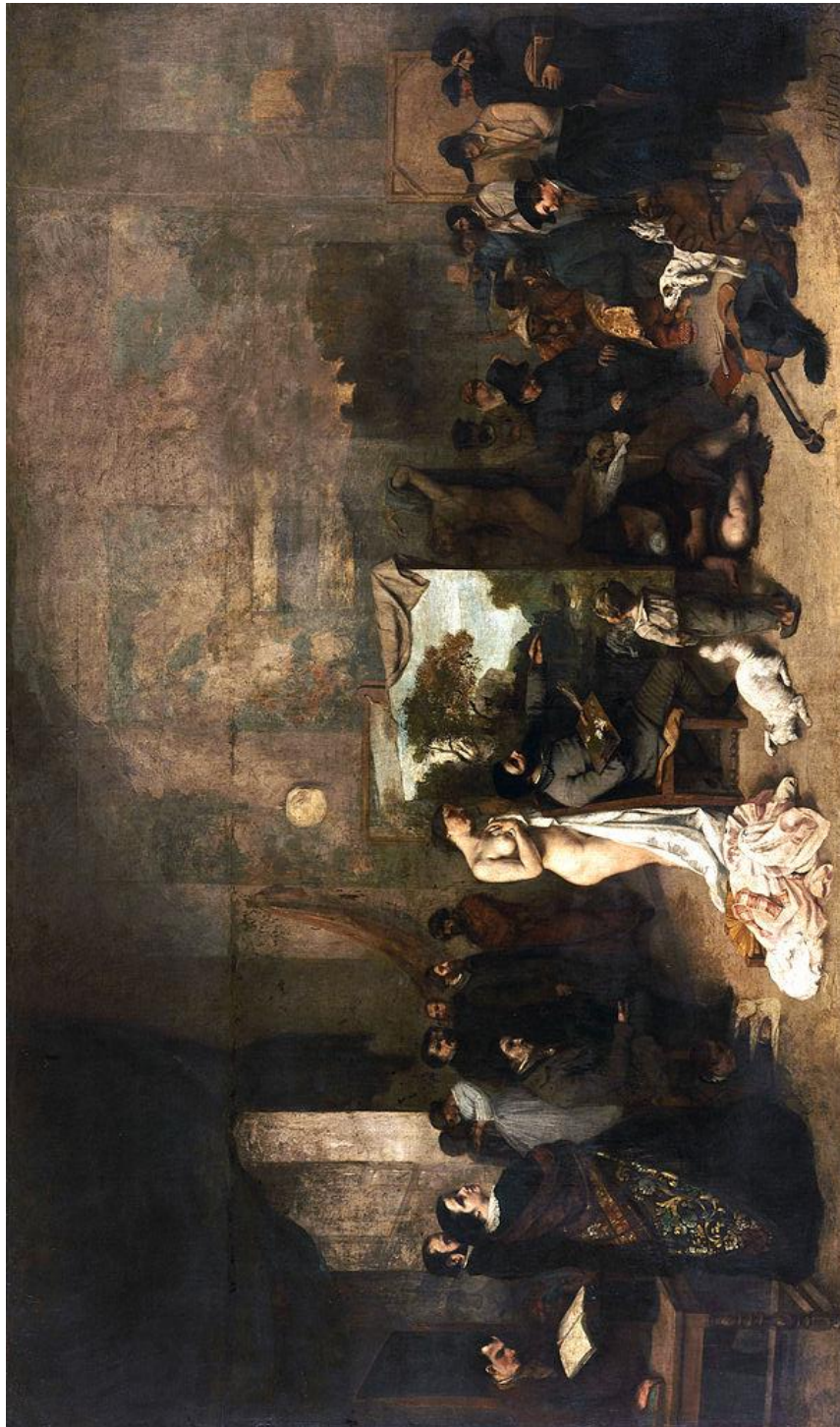


Fig. 2.1: Gustave Courbet, *L'Atelier du peintre: Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique et morale* (*The Painter's Studio: A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*), 1855

Oil on canvas, 361 x 598cm

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *Negotiating the Dark Underbelly: Fear and Destitution in the Shadows*



Fig. 3.1: Honoré Daumier, *Gargantua*, 1831  
Lithograph, 30.5 x 21.4cm  
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

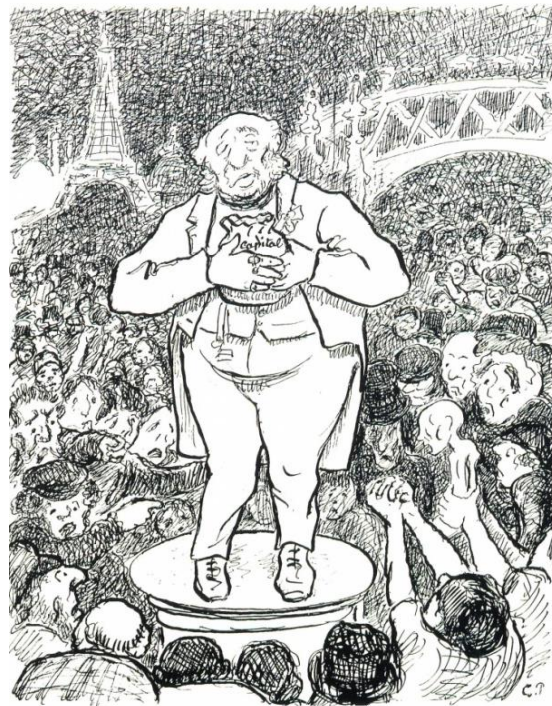


Fig. 3.2: Camille Pissarro, *Capital from Turpitudes Sociales (Social Scandals)*, 1889  
Pen and ink on paper, 31 x 24cm  
Jean Bonna Collection, Geneva, Switzerland.





Fig. 3.3: Émile Bayard, *Cosette*, 1886  
Engraving (from 1862 drawing)  
Private collection (original).



Fig. 3.4: Edgar Degas, *Répétition d'un ballet sur la scène (Rehearsal on Stage)*, 1874  
Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 72.4cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 3.5: John Simmons, *There Lies Titania*, 1872  
Oil on canvas  
The Maas Gallery, London, United Kingdom.



Fig. 3.6: Jean-Louis Forain, *Le Client (The Client)*, 1878  
Pencil, watercolour, and gouache, 24.7 x 32.8cm  
Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, United States of America.





Fig. 3.7: Edgar Degas, *Le Client (The Client)*, 1877  
 Charcoal on paper, 21.5 x 15.9cm  
 Musée Picasso, Paris, France.



Fig. 3.8: Jean-Louis Forain, *Un Coucher (A Bedtime)*, 1877  
 Watercolour, gouache, and India ink on paper, 73.7 x 30cm  
 Private collection.

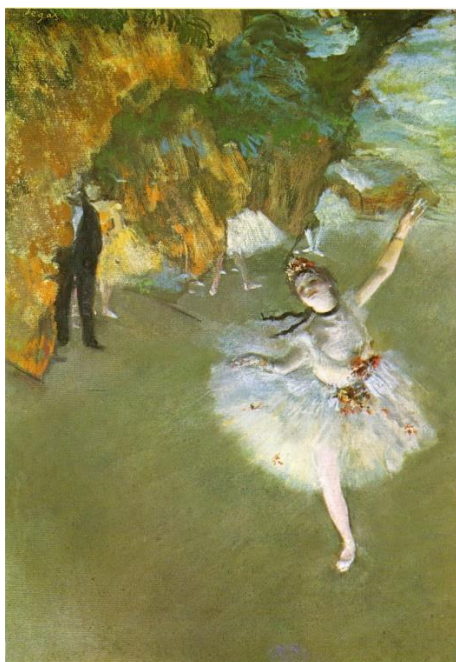


Fig. 3.9: Edgar Degas, *L'Étoile (The Star)*, c.1878  
Oil on canvas, 58.4 x 42cm  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.



Fig. 3.10: Alphonse Mucha, *Printemps (Spring)*, 1896  
Oil on wood panel  
Private collection.



Fig. 3.11: Edgar Degas, *Femme avec les Jumelles* (Woman with Binoculars), c.1865  
Thinned oil on paper, 27.9 x 22.4cm  
British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

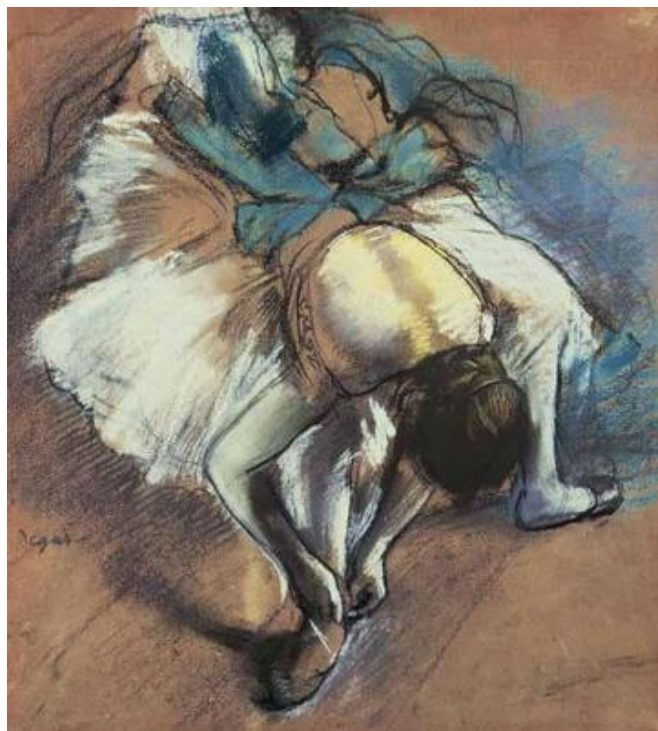


Fig. 3.12: Edgar Degas, *Danseuse ferme sa ballerine* (Dancer Fastening her Pump), 1880  
Pastel and chalk on paper  
Private collection.





Fig. 3.13: Edgar Degas, *Le Tub (The Tub)*, 1886  
 Pastel on card, 69.9 x 69.9cm  
 Hill-Stead Museum, Connecticut, United States of America.



Fig. 3.14: Edgar Degas, *Danseuse à la barre (Dancer at the Bar)*, c.1885  
 Pastel and chalk on paper  
 Location unknown.

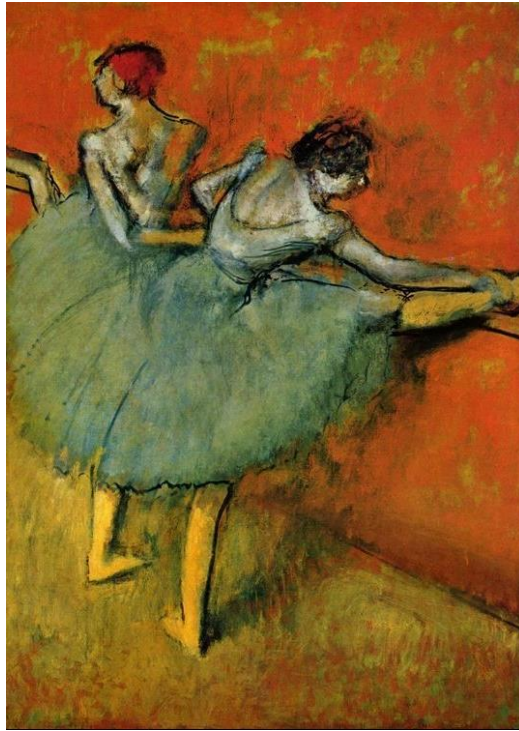


Fig. 3.15: Edgar Degas, *Danseuses à la barre* (*Dancers at the Bar*), 1888  
 Pastel on card, 130 x 97cm  
 The Phillips Collection, Washington DC, United States of America.

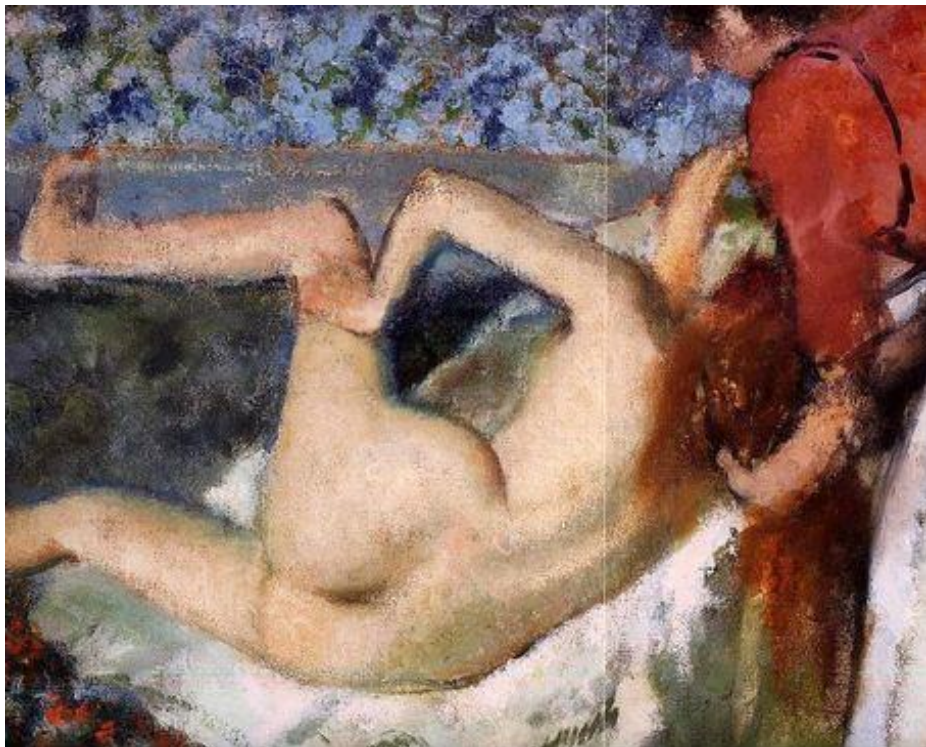


Fig. 3.16: Edgar Degas, *La baignoire II* (*The Bath II*), c. 1896  
 Pastel on card  
 Location unknown.



Fig. 3.17: Edgar Degas, *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Little Dancer of Fourteen*), c.1881  
Wax, fabric and human hair (original sculpture), bronze (28 subsequent casts), 98.4 x 41.9 x 36.5cm  
Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom location of original unknown.  
View A (front diagonal).



Fig. 3.18: Edgar Degas, *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Little Dancer of Fourteen*), c.1881  
Wax, fabric and human hair (original sculpture), bronze (28 subsequent casts), 98.4 x 41.9 x 36.5cm  
Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom  
View B (reverse).



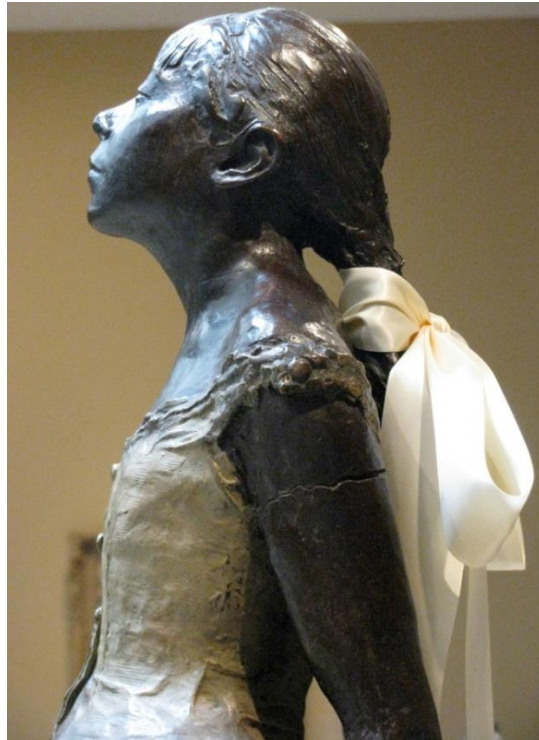


Fig. 3.19: Edgar Degas, *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Little Dancer of Fourteen*), c.1881  
Wax, fabric and human hair (original sculpture), bronze (28 subsequent casts), 98.4 x 41.9 x 36.5cm  
Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom  
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Fig. 3.20: Edgar Degas, *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Little Dancer of Fourteen*), c.1881  
Wax, fabric and human hair (original sculpture), bronze (28 subsequent casts), 98.4 x 41.9 x 36.5cm  
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View D (head in profile).



Fig. 3.21: Edgar Degas, *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Little Dancer of Fourteen*), c.1881  
Wax, fabric and human hair (original sculpture), bronze (28 subsequent casts), 98.4 x 41.9 x 36.5cm  
Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom  
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Fig. 3.22: Edgar Degas, *Étude Nue Pour La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (*Nude Study for the Little Dancer of Fourteen*), 1878-1881  
Pigmented beeswax, plaster, wood, and bronze, 69.5 x 29.3 x 30.3cm  
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, United States of America





Fig. 3.23 : Johann Kaspar Lavater, illustration from *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (*Physiognomic Fragments for Furthering the Knowledge and Love of Man*), 1775-1778

Woodcut print  
Location of original unknown.

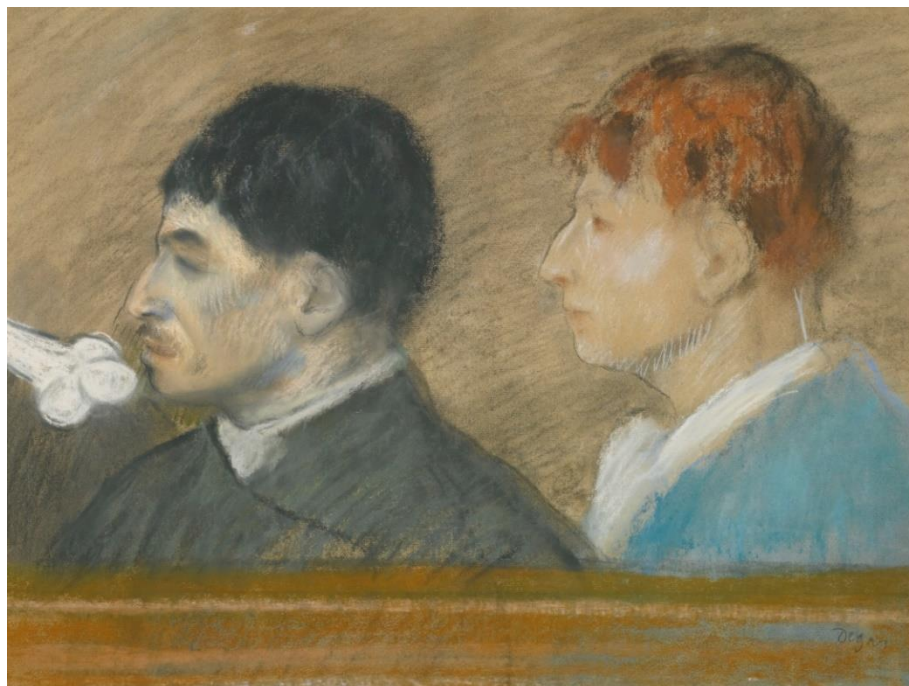


Fig. 3.24: Edgar Degas, *Physiognomie de criminel* (*Criminal Physiognomy*), 1881

Pastel on paper  
Private collection.



Fig. 3.25: Victor Hugo, *Gavroche à 11 ans* (*Gavroche at 11 years old*), 1850  
 Pen and ink on paper  
 Location unknown.



Fig. 3.26: Victor Hugo, *La ville morte* (*The dead city*), 1850  
 Ink wash and charcoal on paper, 43.8 x 66.8 cm  
 Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris, France.



Fig. 3.27: “St Paul’s Cathedral wreathed in smoke”, December 29, 1940  
Photograph, Getty Images, BBC News Online



Fig. 3.28: “A building falls during World War II, London”, c.1940  
Photograph, Rex Images, The Telegraph Online





Fig. 3.29: Victor Hugo, *Pieuvre avec les initiales V.H.* (*Octopus with the initials V.H.*), 1866  
 Pen and ink wash on paper, 35.7 x 25.9cm  
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.



Fig. 3.30: Victor Hugo, *Le serpent* (*The snake*), 1866  
 Pen, sepia and gouache on paper, 31.5 x 49.1cm  
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Fig. 3.31: Victor Hugo, *Silhouette fantastique* (*Fantastical silhouette*), 1854  
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Fig. 3.32: Victor Hugo, *Taches avec empreintes* (*Stains with fingerprints*), 1865  
Ink wash on paper, 26 x 19.5cm  
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.



Fig. 3.33: Charles Méryon, *Le Stryge*, (*The Strix*), 1853  
Ink etching on paper, 16.8 x 13.8cm  
Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, United States of America



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Blinded by the Light: Solace in the Shadows*



Fig. 4.1: Odilon Redon, *Ensuite parait un être singulier, ayant une tête humaine sur un corps de poisson* (Then appears a singular being, having a human head on the body of a fish), Plate V from Series I of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (The Temptation of St. Anthony), 1888

Lithograph on chine appliqué, 27.2 x 17cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.

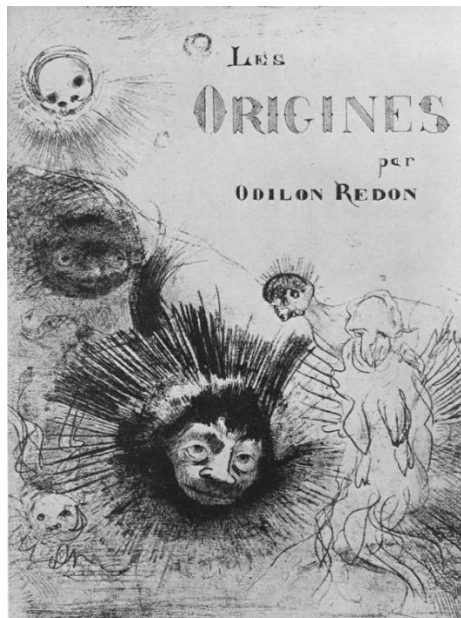


Fig. 4.2: Odilon Redon, frontispiece to *Les Origines* (Origins), 1883

Lithograph on paper, 30.7 x 22.5cm  
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, United States of America

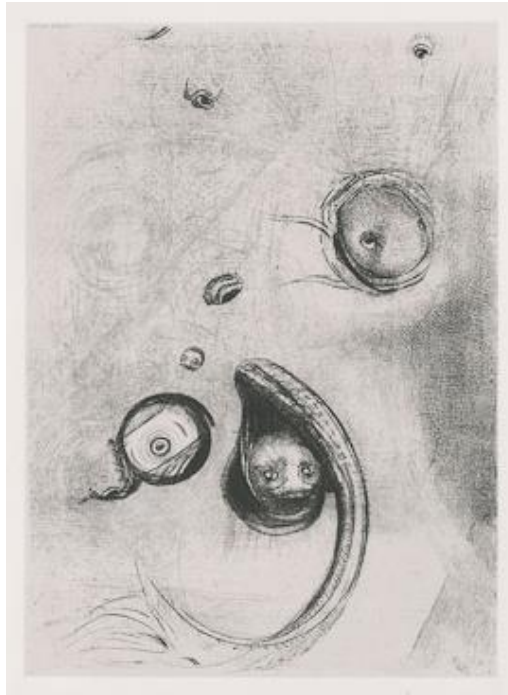


Fig. 4.3: Odilon Redon, *Et que des yeux sans tête flottaient comme des mollusques* (And the eyes without heads were floating like molluscs), Plate XIII from Series III of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (The Temptation of St. Anthony), 1894  
Lithograph on chine appliqué, 30.9 x 22.2cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 4.4: Odilon Redon, *N'y a-t-il pas un monde invisible?* (Is there not an Invisible World ?), 1887  
Lithograph on chine appliqué, 21.9 x 17cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.



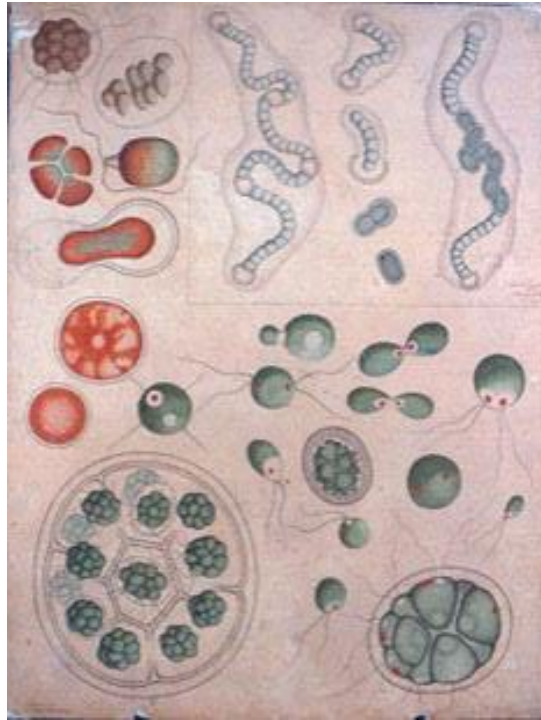


Fig. 4.5 : Armand Clavaud, *Educational Illustration*, c.1870  
 Watercolour on paper  
 Jardin Botanique, Bordeaux, France.



Fig. 4.6: Odilon Redon, *Chimère (Chimera)*, 1883  
 Charcoal and chalk on paper  
 Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands.



Fig. 4.7: Odilon Redon, *Écllosion (Blossoming)* from *Dans le rêve (In the Dream)*, 1879  
 Lithograph on chine appliqué, 32.8 x 25.6cm  
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 4.8: Odilon Redon, *La Cellule auriculaire (Auricular Cell)*, 1893  
 Lithograph on chine collé, 26.8 x 25cm  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 4.9: Odilon Redon, *Le puits* (*The Well*), 1880  
 Charcoal and chalk on paper, 35.6 x 23.8cm  
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 4.10: Odilon Redon, *Je me suis enfoncé dans la solitude. J'habitais l'arbre derrière moi* (*I plunged into solitude. I dwelt in the tree behind me*), Plate IX from Series III of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (*The Temptation of St. Anthony*), 1894  
 Lithograph on chine-collé, 29.9 x 22.5cm  
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America





Fig. 4.11: Odilon Redon, *Tête à la tige* (*Head on a Stem*), c.1916  
Charcoal on paper  
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, United States of America.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Toy Town Theatre: No Shadow, No Soul*

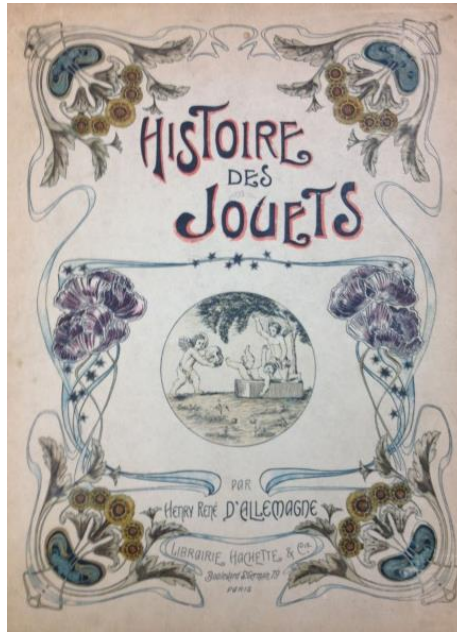


Fig. 5.1: Henry René D'Allemagne, front cover to *Histoire des Jouets* (*History of Toys*), 1902,  
Watercolour on paper  
Archives and Research Collection, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.



Fig. 5.2: Gustave Doré, *Le petit chaperon rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*), 1864  
Wood engraving print, 19.3 x 24.5cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States of America





Fig. 5.3: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Garçon avec un petit soldat* (*Boy with a Toy Soldier*), c. 1875  
 Oil on canvas, 35.4 x 27cm  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, United States of America.



Fig. 5.4: Edouard Manet, *Le Fife* (*The Fifer*), 1866  
 Oil on canvas, 160 x 97cm  
 Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

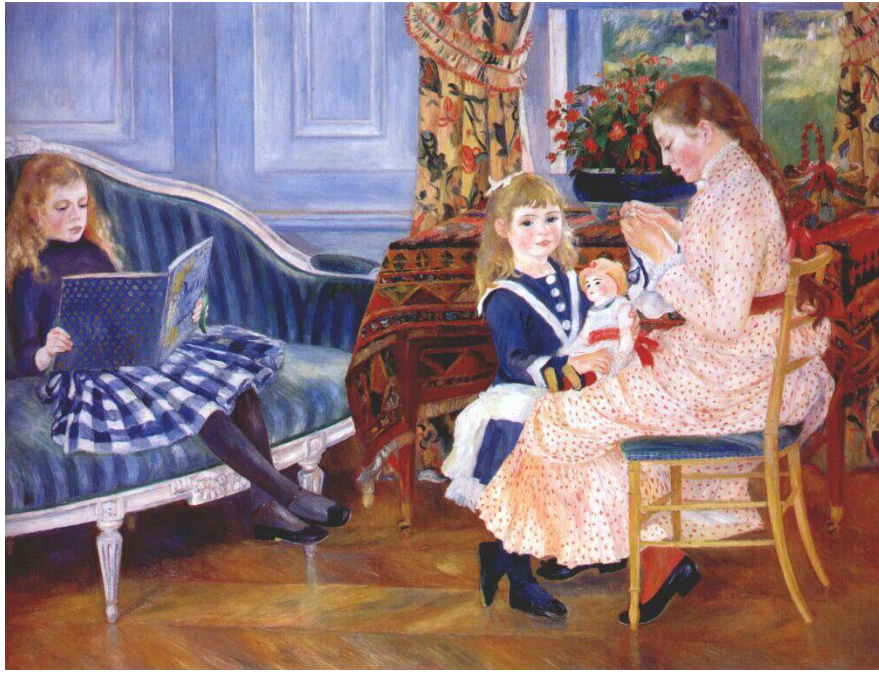


Fig. 5.5: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *L'après-midi des enfants à Wargemont* (*Children's Afternoon at Wargemont*), 1884  
Oil on canvas, 127 x 173cm  
Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany.



Fig. 5.6: An example of a *Jumeau* doll in original clothing  
Denise Van Patten Collection, California, United States of America



Fig. 5.7: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Alice et Elisabeth Cahen d'Anvers (Pink and Blue)*, 1881  
Oil on canvas, 119 x 74cm  
São Paulo Museum of Art, São Paulo, Brazil.



Fig. 5.8: Two freestanding *Jumeau Bébé* dolls  
Billie Nelson Tyrell Collection, Los Angeles, United States of America





Fig. 5.9: A close-up of the characteristic face of the *Jumeau Triste* doll  
Kathy Libraty antique doll collection, New York, United States of America



Fig. 5.10: A *Jumeau Bébé Phonographe* with its dress lifted to expose the complex mechanism  
contained in the torso.

Photograph in Constance Eileen King's *Jumeau*, 1983  
Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, United States of America



Fig. 5.11: The interior of a bisque *Jumeau* doll head of the *Diplome d'Honneur* period. The tension of the stringing was maintained by the use of the heavy metal spring.  
Photograph in Constance Eileen King's *Jumeau*, 1983  
Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, United States of America



## CHAPTER SIX

### *Breaking the Mould: Shadowy Symbolism and Silhouetted Sovereignty*



Fig. 6.1: Mary Cassatt, *Petite fille dans un fauteuil bleu* (Little Girl in a Blue Armchair), 1878  
Oil on canvas, 88 x 128.5cm  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, United States of America.



Fig. 6.2: Artist unknown, *Trewey Exhibiting Upon A Stage*  
Illustration in Henry Ridgely Evans' *The Old and the New Magic*, 1906  
The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, United States of America



Fig. 6.3: Artist unknown, *Treway's Silhouettes of Eminent Men*  
Illustration in Henry Ridgely Evans' *The Old and the New Magic*, 1906  
The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, United States of America.

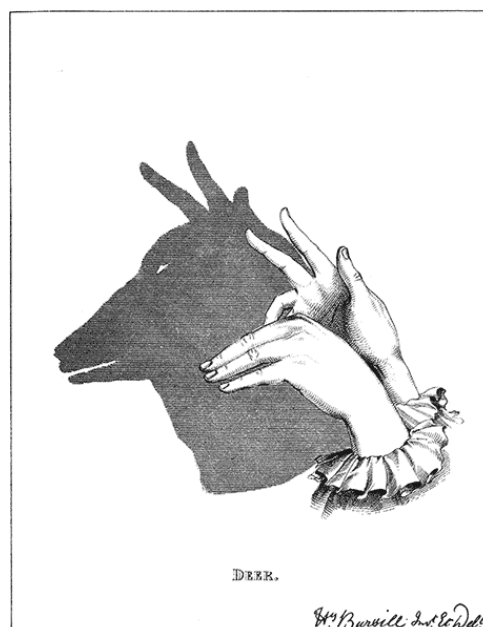


Fig. 6.4: Henry Bursill, *Deer*, 1859  
Illustration found in *Hand Shadows to be Thrown upon the Wall*  
Griffith and Farran, London, United Kingdom.

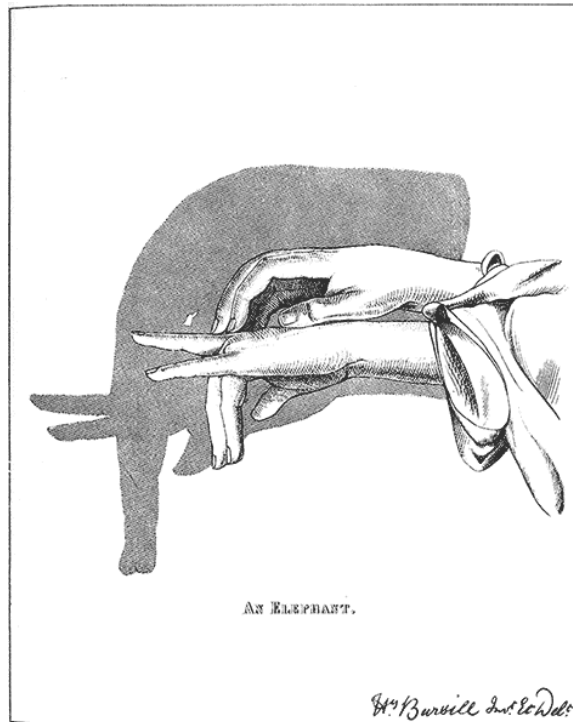


Fig. 6.5: Henry Bursill, *An Elephant*, 1859  
 Illustration in *Hand Shadows to be Thrown upon the Wall*  
 Griffith and Farran, London, United Kingdom.



Fig. 6.6: Henry Bursill, *A Bird In Flight*, 1859  
 Illustration in *Hand Shadows to be Thrown upon the Wall*  
 Griffith and Farran, London, United Kingdom.





Fig. 6.7: Félix Vallotton, *Le Ballon* (*The Ball*), 1899  
Oil on wood, 48 x 61cm  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.



Fig. 6.8: Félix Vallotton, *La Lingère, Chambre Bleue* (*The Laundrywoman, Blue Room*), 1900  
Oil on paper laid on canvas, 50 x 80cm  
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, United States of America.

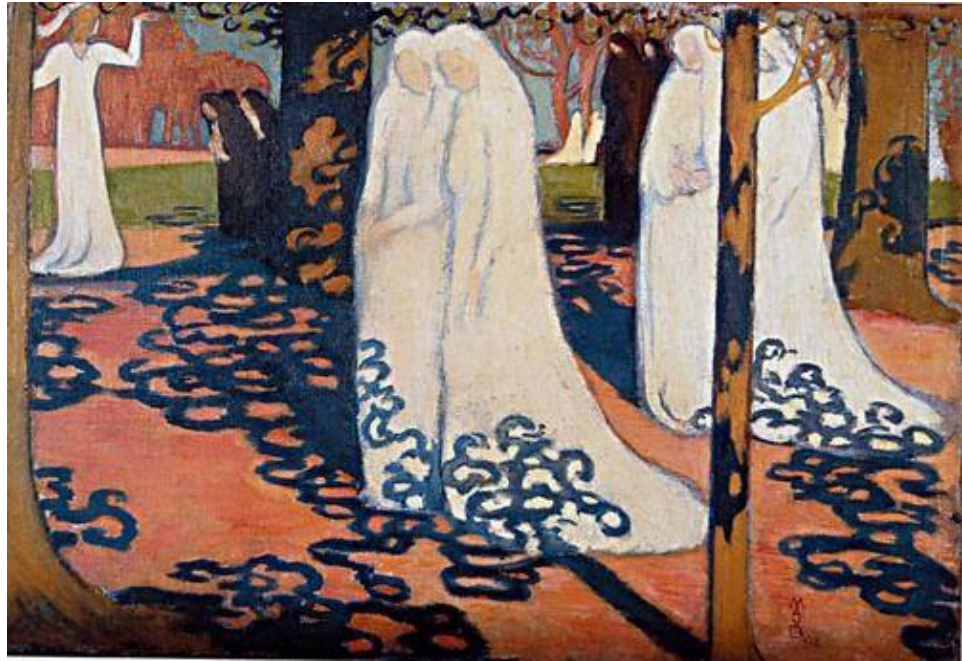


Fig. 6.9: Maurice Denis, *Procession sous les Arbres (Procession Under the Trees)*, 1892  
Oil on canvas, 42 x 28.8cm  
Peter Marino Collection, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 6.10: Kyonaga Torii *The Third Month*, from the series *Twelve Months in the South*, 1784  
Woodblock print, 39.1 x 51.3cm  
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, United States of America.



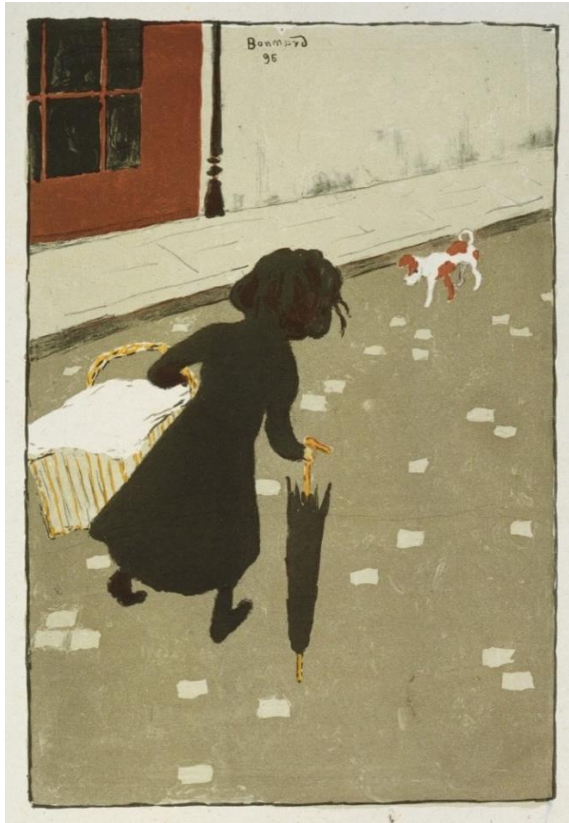


Fig. 6.11: Pierre Bonnard, *La Petite Blanchisseuse* (*The Little Laundry Girl*), 1896  
Lithograph on paper, 29.5 x 20cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.



Fig. 6.12: Hiroshige Utagawa, *Night Snow at Kambara*, print sixteen of *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido*, 1833-34  
Woodblock print on paper, 22.5 x 34.9cm  
Harvard Art Museum, Massachusetts, United States of America.





Fig. 6.13: Chōshun Miyagawa, *Ryukyuan Dancer and Musicians*, c. 1718  
Ink and colour on silk, 60 x 105.5cm  
Location unknown.

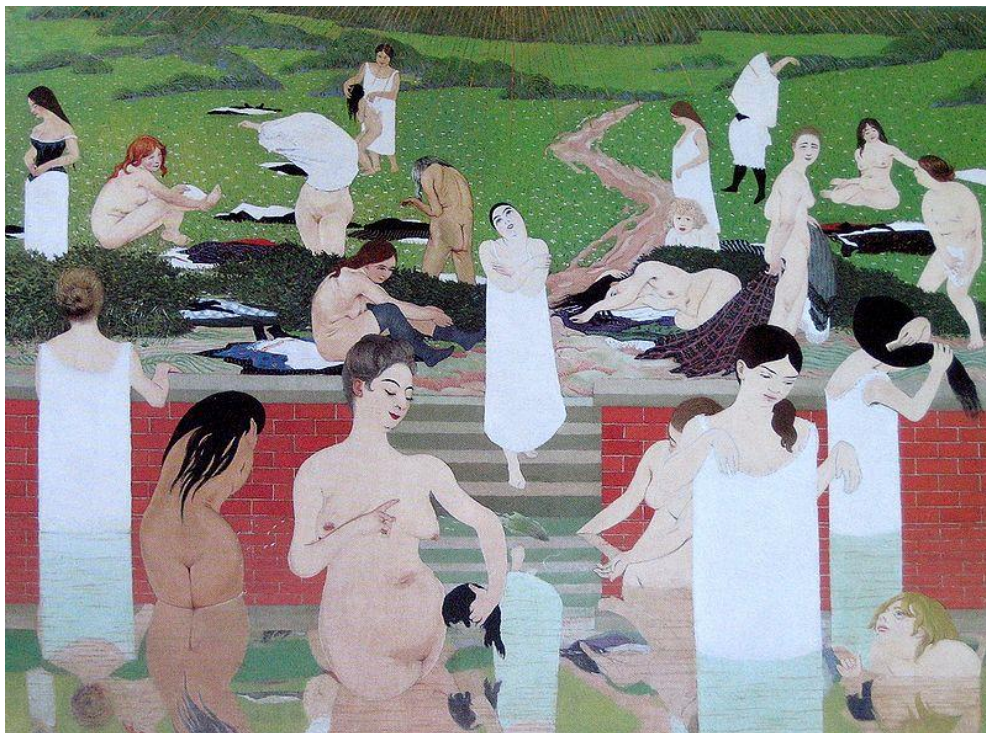


Fig. 6.14: Félix Vallotton, *Le bain au soir d'été* (*The Summer Evening Bath*), 1893  
Oil on canvas, 97 x 103cm  
Zürich Kunsthhaus, Zürich, Switzerland.





Fig. 6.15: William Morris, *Pimpernel* (brick/olive colourway), 1876  
Hand block-print and distemper on paper, 68.5 x 53.3cm  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom.



Fig. 6.16: Walter Crane, *Swan, Rush and Iris*, 1875  
Body colour on paper, 53.1 x 53cm  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom.

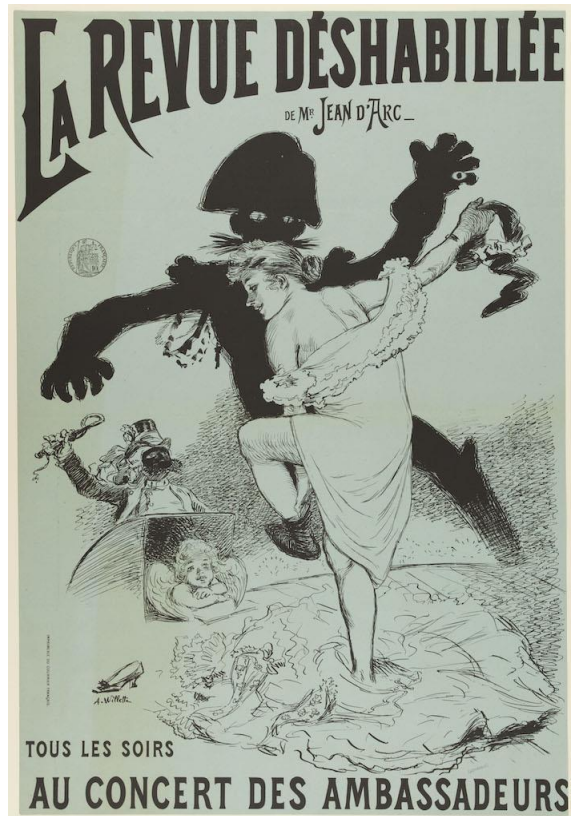


Fig. 6.17: Adolphe Willette, *La revue déshabillé de M. Jean d'Arc* (*The Undressed Review of Ms. Joan of Arc*), 1884  
Lithograph print on paper  
Musée Carnavalet, Paris, France.



Fig. 6.18: Artist unknown, Child students of Loie Fuller practicing a costumed dance performance in a park, c.1900  
Photograph  
Location of original unknown.



Fig. 6.19: Frederick Glasier, *Portrait of Loie Fuller*, 1902  
 Photograph  
 Location of original unknown.



Fig. 6.20: Isaiah West Taber, *Loie Fuller*, c.1897  
 Photograph  
 Location of original unknown.





Fig. 6.21: Theodore C. Marceau, *Loïe Fuller*, c.1890-1909  
 Photograph  
 Location of original unknown.



Fig. 6.22: Pierre Roche, *Statuette Loïe Fuller*, c.1901  
 Bronze on black marble plinth, 50.5 x 28.5 x 30cm  
 Le Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France.



Fig. 6.23: Raoul-François Larche, *Loïe Fuller, la Danseuse (Loïe Fuller, the Dancer)*, 1900  
Bronze, 45.7 x 25.5 x 23.1cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States of America.

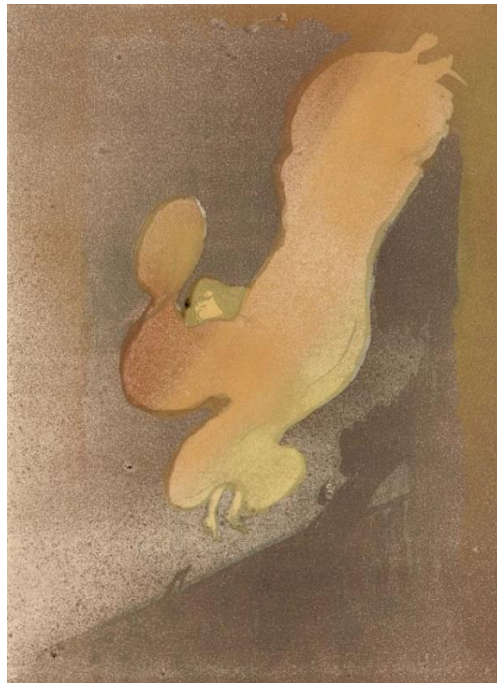


Fig. 6.24: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Miss Loïe Fuller*, 1893  
Colour lithograph with gold and silver powder, 36.8 x 25.8cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States of America.